PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 92

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
17 FEBRUARY—28 FEBRUARY 1986

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THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 92**

SEVENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 17 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENERGY

Coal Industry Dispute

1. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss representations on behalf of miners who are still dismissed as a result of incidents during the 1984-85 industrial dispute; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I meet the chairman regularly to discuss all aspects of the coal industry.

Mr. Strang: Is the Secretary of State aware that the Scottish group of Labour Members is incensed by the cursory and dismissive letter from the chairman of the board on this issue? Does he recognise that 130 miners and their families in Scotland are still suffering from the dispute, and that they have the support of a broad range of opinion, including local authority representatives, the police and the churches? Will he ask the board, particularly in Scotland, to adopt a more compassionate approach?

Mr. Walker: Of those dismissed during the strike, 75 have been reinstated and a number of others are appearing before industrial tribunals, which are making various decisions. This is a matter for the management, who must decide on each case.

Mr. Mason: How many of those miners sacked at the conclusion of the strike still wish to be reinstated? The figure must run into hundreds. They lost 12 months wages during the strike and nearly another 12 months while on the dole. Is not victimisation being taken too far? What is the right hon. Gentleman prepared to do to try to help these men?

Mr. Walker: I watched what happened during the dispute and I have never agreed that all those who took part in the dispute had a right to return, irrespective of whether they caused violence or damage.

Mr. Barron: Does the Secretary of State accept that the call for the men to go before industrial tribunals was made from the Government Dispatch Box? When those tribunals find that men have been unfairly dismissed by the Coal Board, should he not make the Coal Board take them on again? Some of my constituents were found to have been unfairly dismissed, but months later they are still labouring in the dole queues in south Yorkshire.

Mr. Walker: If a tribunal suggests that a person's job should be restored and the employer, whether the Coal Board or anyone else, decides not to reinstate, compensation is available. The hon. Gentleman and many others suggest that all miners should be restored to their previous positions, but some tribunals have rejected that proposition.

Mr. Eadie: The Secretary of State and others on the Government Front Bench have advised aggrieved miners to go to an industrial tribunal. Some industrial tribunals find that men are unfairly dismissed and suggest that they be given back their jobs. Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that parading a bogus neutrality before the House offends opinion everywhere?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman says that if a Labour Government were in power they would decide whether an employee should be kept on. That has never happened under a Labour Government, nor do I think it would happen if a Labour Government were in power.

Wind Energy

2. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the objectives of his Department's policy on wind energy.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. David Hunt): We currently consider wind energy to be the most promising renewable energy source for electricity generation in the United Kingdom. Our policy is to demonstrate the technical and economic feasibility of large wind turbines, to assess their environmental impact and to encourage research and development aimed at cost reductions and improved performance.

Mr. Chope: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is enormous export potential in this area? Is he aware that a company in my constituency has earned £2·5 million in the last year by making wind turbine blades for export? Will he ensure that research programmes are properly funded so that we can maximise our export potential?

Mr. Hunt: I am pleased to endorse my hon. Friend's remarks and to pay tribute to the company in his constituency. Since 1979 the Government have spent more than £16 million on research and development into the use of wind energy. For the current financial year, our estimated spend is more than £6·5 million.

Mr. O'Brien: In view of the Minister's reply, will he explain why the installation of a wind turbine at Richborough is not yet on stream, even though planning consent was given in 1984? What minor altrerations must be made to the planning consent so that it can come on stream?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman is wrong to draw that conclusion. A number of developments are proceeding. This country is in the van of technological and technical advances.

On the Richborough development, we recently announced departmental support for the 1MW machine to be built by James Howden and Company Ltd.

Mr. Rost: Will my hon. Friend carefully consider the complaints from one or two private generators of wind power that they are not receiving from area boards the fair deal to which they are entitled under the Energy Act? If he does not deal with that problem, potential will be put at risk.

Mr. Hunt: I am as anxious as my hon. Friend to realise potential. I shall certainly consider any cases that he brings to my attention.

Alternative Energy Supplies

3. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about recent increases in public funds for research into alternative forms of energy; and what have been the results therefrom.

11. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the level of funding proposed for research into alternative sources of energy in 1986-87.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): The Government have identified what we believe to be the most promising renewable energy technologies, and major support will be given for their development. Expenditure on the renewable energy programme is currently running at about £14 million a year.

Mr. Chapman: I welcome the increase in Government funds for research and the fact that more than 400 projects are being supported. Which research programmes show the most hope for renewable forms of energy that will make a significant contribution to our energy demands —apart from wind, which has already been mentioned?

Mr. Goodlad: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's recognition of the very substantial increase in funding for research and development into renewables. He referred to the very important advances in wind energy, as described by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary.

A further major achievement of departmentally funded research and development has been the establishment of a passive solar design and the use of waste as a fuel, which are both cost-effective energy technologies.

Mr. Ron Davies: Obviously the expenditure referred to by the Minister is welcome. However, as 10 times that amount — £486 million — has been spent on sacking mineworkers, has not the Minister got his priorities slightly wrong? Would he not be better advised to take steps to conserve and protect our coal capacity, at least for the forseeable future, because coal will remain our primary source of energy?

Mr. Goodlad: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the importance of coal in our energy resources has been recognised by the Government through massive investment, and that will remain the case.

Mr. Speller: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced last week that only 17 per cent. of the money spent on energy research is on non-nuclear. Does that not mean that the share for alternative energy is very small? Does he not think that a rather larger percentage would be justified?

Mr. Goodlad: The level of funding on research into renewables has been considered by the Advisory Council on Research and Development for Fuel and Power, which decided that the total size of the programme was reasonable.

Research and development for different technologies have different inherent costs. The development and trial of boilers for burning waste paper and board is obviously small scale, and therefore not expensive, whereas fast reactor development is inherently large scale.

Mr. Benn: In considering what resources the Government should devote to renewable energy sources, has the Minister taken account of the latest release of radioactivity at Sellafield, the great anxiety about the dangers in that area, the number of releases of radioactivity from Windscale and now Sellafield, the failure of the Atomic Energy Authority and British Nuclear Fuels plc to provide information and the fact that the United States has not ordered a nuclear power station for nine years? Does that not point towards less nuclear and more coal conservation and renewable energy?

Mr. Goodlad: I know that the right hon. Gentleman will keep in proper perspective the matters that he has raised. Of course all relevant factors are taken into account. During the last four years of the Government in which he was Secretary of State, departmental spending

on renewable energy research and development amounted to £7·6 million. Over the past four years of this Government, departmental spending on renewable energy research and development has amounted to £56·8 million —over seven times as much.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Minister aware that if it were not for the incidents at Windscale, which have more to do with managerial incompetence than with deficiencies in the technology, nuclear power in Britain would have an excellent future? Will he accept the importance of my comments in that context and do everything possible to ensure that higher standards of management are introduced at that plant?

Mr. Goodlad: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's concern and, as I have told him before, it is extremely important that the magnitude of any incidents should be kept in the proper perspective. I believe, as I know he does, that nuclear power in Britain has an excellent future.

Mr. Eadie: The Minister must recall that on 25 October 1985 the House debated alternative sources of energy and the broad general view was that to spend £14 million on that was not enough. It was also announced that we did everything but scupper the wave energy programme, yet we have now learnt that the Norwegians have developed wave energy. Is that not a slap in the face for British expenditure and British technology?

Mr. Goodlad: This Government have spent a great deal more than was spent by the hon. Gentleman's party when it was in power. It lies rather oddly with him to suggest that there should be greater expenditure. He will be aware that the Advisory Committee on Research and Development has advised that the amount is reasonable. The wave energy programme was ended because a detailed assessment showed that it would be uneconomic for large-scale use for United Kingdom electricity supply.

Coal Industry (Private Investment)

4. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Energy which Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries permit the investment of private sector capital in major deep mined coal operations.

Mr. David Hunt: Investment of such capital is permitted in a number of OECD countries with major coal industries, including Australia and the United States. I shall arrange for a full list to be published in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he read in today's papers that the workers of the National Freight Corporation, who bought shares in their own company, now find that those shares are worth 22 times what they were when they made the original investment. Will my hon. Friend write today or later this week to Mr. Roy Lynk and ask whether the Nottinghamshire miners might like to set up a similar deal?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to pay tribute to the work force at the National Freight Corporation. The Government have always said that they would look positively at any plan put forward by the miners to take a more direct stake in their industry.

Mr. Allen McKay: While the Minister is looking at investment, will he look at the level of investment in capital projects in the mining industry that was undertaken pre-MacGregor on the basis of the number of pits and men at that time? Will he take into consideration the rundown of pits and men and bear in mind that it is time that there was a capital review with the object of wiping out the capital debt of the few remaining collieries?

Mr. Hunt: No, Sir. But in the same breath the hon. Gentleman should pay tribute to the fact that under this Government over £4 billion has been invested in the coal industry. The productivity figures are now so good because of the tremendous effort of the work force, combined with clever investment in existing pits.

Mr. Hickmet: Is there any reason in principle why profitable pits should not be privatised?

Mr. Hunt: As we have made clear from the Dispatch Box on a number of occasions, the Government have no plans for privatising the National Coal Board's mining activities, and no discussions on any such proposals have taken place between the Department and the NCB.

Mr. Hardy: Will the hon. Gentleman remind the hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) that the level of industrial investment in the private sector in Britain is well below the average for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development? Would it not be wise for such investment as there is to be channelled into appropriate directions and not into this unwanted direction?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman has omitted to pay tribute to the level of investment, 80 per cent. of which goes into existing pits and only 20 per cent. of which goes into new pits. The level of such investment is much more than the level in the rest of the Community put together.

Mr. Rogers: During the miners' strike the chairman of the NCB made a commitment not only to the National Union of Mineworkers but to hon. Members that the Margam new mine would be developed when the strike was over. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on whether Mr. MacGregor was lying or whether——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The subject is private sector capital.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. Gentleman comment on whether Mr. MacGregor was telling untruths or whether he was saving the money for private development by friends of the Conservative party?

Mr. Hunt: No proposal on the Margam mine has been put to my Department.

Following is the information:

List of the main OECD countries which permit private sector capital investment in deep-mined coal operations

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Canada
F. R. Germany
Japan
New Zealand
Spain
Turkey
United States of America

Gas Flaring

5. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much gas was flared from offshore fields on the United Kingdom continental shelf during 1985; and how this compares with 1979.

Mr. Buchannan-Smith: A daily average of 6·6 million cubic metres of gas was flared from offshore installations in 1985. In 1979 the comparable figure was about 18 million cubic metres a day. This represents a reduction of about 63 per cent. in gas flaring over a period when oil production increased by about 60 per cent.

Mr. Hannam: I congratulate the industry and the Government on achieving this substantial reduction in gas flaring. Does that not confirm that we were right not to proceed with the gas-gathering pipeline? Is there further scope for improvement in systems to reduce gas wastage?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The industry's action in gathering gas is significant. For example, this summer we shall see the commissioning of the Fulmar-St. Fergus pipeline, which has the scope to take in additional fields. The north leg extension of the flags pipeline is just beginning to take gas from Statfjord. I welcome all these developments.

Gas Industry (Privatisation)

6. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent representations he has received about the implications for safety in the gas industry of the legislation to privatise the British Gas Corporation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have received a number of representations. As the hon. Lady knows, the Gas Bill strengthens and extends the existing safety arrangements.

Mrs. Clwyd: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that privatisation of the industry will place additional responsibilities on the Health and Safety Executive? Does he agree that since 1979 the executive's staff has decreased by 13 per cent. and that the number of inspectors has decreased by 15 per cent.? What assurance can the right hon. Gentleman give on safety?

Mr. Walker: Staffing is a matter for my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The Health and Safety Commission is fully satisfied that it can carry out these duties. I am sure that it will do them very well.

Mr. Michael Morris: Has not safety in the gas industry been of paramount importance throughout its long history? Are there not many industries in the private sector dealing with dangerous substances which have an excellent safety record?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir. We took advantage of the presentation of the Gas Bill to improve in a number of ways the legislation applying to the gas industry. The industry's excellent safety record will therefore continue and, if anything, will be improved.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the Gas Bill, which is in Committee, will enable the private sector to have the right of entry into people's homes for safety purposes? Does the right hon. Gentleman have any plans for controls to prevent abuses of that right?

Mr. Walker: That will be looked at in the normal way. The only right of entry into people's homes will be in the interest of safety. I have received no complaints on this issue.

Mr. Squire: I welcome the privatisation of the industry, but I urge my right hon. Friend to consider the possible advantages of compulsory registration of all gas installers?

Mr. Walker: That is a matter for my noble Friend rather than for me. Progress is being made in the preparation of a proper code and a report will be made. One wants to avoid a highly bureaucratic and expensive system for which there is no real justification.

Mr. Frank Cook: Is it the practice of the British Gas Corporation to keep files on individuals who are opposed to privatisation and on members of their families, and to make them freely available to employees of the British Gas Corporation, in the same way as British Nuclear Fuels plc keeps files on those who are opposed to nuclear matters and on members of their families, and makes them freely available to employees? Who authorises that practice, and what will the right hon. Gentleman do to stop it?

Mr. Walker: There is a clear statement from British Nuclear Fuels plc that the hon. Gentleman's allegation is totally untrue. There is no justification for the remarks. The file of people opposed to the privatisation of the British Gas Corporation would be so thin that I would not bother.

Mr. Hickmet: What will be the future of the Gas Consumers Council after privatisation and will my right hon. Friend outline its role in monitoring safety standards?

Mr. Walker: I do not think that its role has been the monitoring of safety. That is an expert role, which the Health and Safety Executive will continue to fulfil. We have provided for a strong consumer council, and I think that it will be a very effective one.

Mr. Rowlands: During our debates on the Gas Bill we have become increasingly worried about the strength and manpower of the Health and Safety Executive for delivering the provisions under the Bill. Will the right hon. Gentleman consult the other Ministers to ensure that the Health and Safety Executive will have sufficient manpower to monitor the responsibilities given to it by the Bill? We need more, not fewer, inspectors for that purpose.

Mr. Walker: I am pleased to say that the Health and Safety Executive is confident that it will have more people devoting more time to that matter than ever before.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

7. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his policy towards the level of resources available to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in the light of the document "Communities in the East Durham Coalfield", produced by Durham county council, Easington district council and Sunderland borough council, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government will continue to monitor closely the adequacy of the funds available to NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. The £20 million to which the company presently has access remains sufficient for its current needs.

Mr. Boyes: I assume that the Minister has had the opportunity to read the document to which I refer—I see he has a copy—and I am sure he will agree that it is well produced, containing a number of interesting and worthwhile projects. The hon. Gentleman will also notice that £31 million of that money is for economic development. Because NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. money is generally channelled through the private sector, which is poorly represented in the region covered by the document, will he make money available for the project? Above all, will he tell me that the principle of channelling money through local authorities is one that the Government find acceptable?

Mr. Hunt: One of the great success stories of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. has been the way in which for every £1 that it invests in a project, £6 has been attracted from other sources. The cost of creating new jobs, estimated at about £5,000 when NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. was set up, may now drop as low as £1,500. That is a tremendous success story for the company.

Mr. Portillo: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a great achievement on the part of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.? Will he confirm that it is his impression that any teething problems which the company experienced have now been overcome? Will he tell the House whether NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. or any equivalent body existed under the previous Labour Government, when so many pits were being closed?

Mr. Hunt: I am happy to confirm what my hon. Friend said. The Government have done something which no other Government have done. They have made the National Coal Board responsible for bringing new job opportunities to mining areas through the work of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. The Opposition seem to forget that NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. is now creating job opportunities at the rate of 500 a month.

Mr. Dorman: Does the Minister agree that the document shows that the future of the east Durham coal communities mentioned in the question, most of which are in my constituency, is very bleak? In those circumstances, will he press the National Coal Board not to close pits until the work being done by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in providing other jobs is firmly established? If not, is he prepared to see more than 30 per cent. unemployment in my constituency?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman must recognise that many pits in his constituency and around that area closed at the time of the previous Labour Government when NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. did not exist. By the end of January NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. had committed £1 million to aid new industry in the north-east, creating nearly 500 job opportunities. Of course, pits have always closed, because reserves are exhausted or for economic reasons. The Government have done something about those reasons.

Union of Democratic Mineworkers

8. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he last met the leaders of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers; and what matters were discussed.

Mr. Peter Walker: I have not yet met the leaders of the UDM, but I shall be happy to do so if they request a meeting.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the concern of my constituents that the Leicestershire mineworkers did not leave the National Union of Mineworkers to join the Union of Democratic Mineworkers? Will he confirm that it is in order for any individual mineworker to join the UDM if he wishes to support Roy Lynk and be an alternative voice to which the National Coal Board will listen?

Mr. Walker: That is a matter for the decision or choice of the individual miner, and I am happy to confirm that.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Is the Secretary of State aware that his statement this afternoon is welcome? Will he condemn the unwillingness of the energy spokesmen of the Labour party to meet that important body of representatives of ordinary working people in the midlands?

Mr. Walker: It has always been the view of the Government that any leader of an officially recognised trade union should have the right to meet Ministers. That should apply to shadow Ministers as well.

Mrs. Currie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in south Derbyshire, although the men are united in their opposition to Arthur Scargill and all his works, they are divided as to which of the coal unions they should join? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in those circumstances, it behoves not only the National Coal Board to be completely even-handed between the unions, but the men to work together for the future of the industry?

Mr. Walker: The NCB is pursuing the policy that any employer should, which is to recognise the representatives of those who are in the majority in any location. That has been the NCB's policy, and I think that it is correct.

Mr. Janner: Has it come to the Secretary of State's attention—and will he draw it to the attention of the hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels)—that the Leicestershire coal miners remained in the NUM because they had a ballot and decided by a substantial majority that that is where they wished to remain and fight and that the vast majority of Leicestershire coal miners are behind Jack Jones and his leadership, and so am I?

Mr. Walker: I should be interested to hear whether the hon. and learned Gentleman and his colleagues are also behind Arthur Scargill.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Nottinghamshire councillors who are members of the UDM are being boycotted by the Labour party? Will he assure the House and the UDM that they will always have a sympathetic hearing on the Conservative Benches?

Mr. Walker: Yes, Sir.

Coal Industry (Colliery Review Procedure)

9. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the National Coal Board to discuss the working of the modified colliery review procedure.

Mr. Peter Walker: I last met the chairman on 12 February when, among other matters, we discussed the operation of the modified colliery review procedure.

Mr. Dormand: Does the Secretary of State recall that last week I raised with him the serious inconsistency in the reviews on Horden and Bates'? Will he confirm that he has

the authority to instruct, or to offer strong guidelines to the review body that social and economic effects must be taken into consideration when decisions are taken? If not, does that not make a farce of the review system and, perhaps more important, lead to a substantial loss of confidence in that procedure on the part of the NUM?

Mr. Walker: I can only say that one of the problems of starting a genuine review body is that if several individuals are judging individual cases, they will not all come forward with a universal viewpoint. That is bound to happen. I can understand the concern and aggravation that there is not a uniform viewpoint. If there is a uniform viewpoint in one direction some might be pleased, but if it is in another direction, others might be displeased. The review body is at the commencement of its proceedings, and that is what has happened so far.

Mr. Ryman: Is the Secretary of State aware—I am sure he is—that on 4 February Mr. Peter Bowsher, QC, made a strong recommendation that the Bates' colliery should remain open for two years? Is he further aware that the NCB has so far refused to accept that recommendation after a three-day hearing, when the evidence was carefully analysed? Will he use his influence to persuade the NCB to take a decision immediately, upholding the recommendation of Mr. Bowsher?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir, I shall certainly not use any such influence. I do not set myself up as the arbiter of which of the review body's proposals are accepted and which are rejected. That is not my task, nor is it the task of any of Her Majesty's Ministers. No one who has read the Bates' report would say that it was a lovely, clear report enthusiastically suggesting something in one direction. It was perfectly correct for the National Coal Board to announce that it will carefully study the details of the report before taking a decision.

Mr. Orme: In support of my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Ryman) and his point about Bates' colliery and the review body, may I ask the Secretary of State whether he has discussed the matter with the chairman of the National Coal Board, and whether he has a personal opinion on the matter?

Mr. Walker: No, Sir. I have made it clear that it is for the board to decide and come to its conclusions on the matter. I was informed by the NCB chairman that when this substantial report was issued, about a day before a meeting of the board, it decided—sensibly—to examine the report thoroughly before putting it to the board for decision.

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend accept that on Friday last, as a result of a long-standing engagement, I visited the regional director of the NCB in the north-east of England and discussed, among other things, pit closures? He expressed the view most strongly that it was disappointing that only three Members from the north-east had bothered to see him, two of whom were Conservative Members.

Mr. Walker: I cannot comment on the detailed discussion that took place. I can only say that an increasing number of coal mining constituencies now have the privilege of being represented by Tory Members of Parliament.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take it after Question Time.

Oil Production

10. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the total United Kingdom oil production in 1985; and what is the total forecast for 1986.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Our provisional estimate for total United Kingdom oil production in 1985 is 127·4 million tonnes. Equivalent output in 1986, as published in the 1985 Brown Book, is expected to be between 110 million and 130 million tonnes.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that this is substantially more than the net self-sufficiency which was the Government's original objective? Will he also acknowledge that although a fall in oil prices may be beneficial, the collapse of oil prices is not in anyone's interests, in this country or abroad? Does he accept that the time has come for the Government to talk to other oil producers about reducing North sea production?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman advocating our joining an oil producers' cartel. He forgets that Britain is a major consuming country and that its industry has major interests in that direction. I am surprised that, with his knowledge of the North sea, he does not know that the character of North sea production is different from that of the majority of OPEC countries.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House that, despite the current confusion in the oil industry, exploration and development in the North sea will not decline and that Britain will need that oil in the next decade?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It is significant that the oil companies tend to take a much longer-term view of the prospects of the North sea than do some Opposition Members.

Mr. Orme: Should not the Secretary of State make a statement to the House about the collapse of oil prices? Hon. Members are entitled to have such a statement. What would happen if the price fell by another $5 a barrel? Would the Government still not take any action? Will the Minister ask the Secretary of State to make a statement at the earliest opportunity?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: What does the right hon. Gentleman expect will come from such a statement? For what action does he ask? The right hon. Gentleman asks many questions, but does not fully understand the background to the position.

Energy Efficiency

13. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the progress of the Monergy campaign.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Monergy campaign has made a very successful start. Already over 100 events have taken place, including the first two Monergy breakfast briefings attended by 1,700 top executives. The supporting advertising and publicity activities have generated a high level of interest.

Mr. Alton: What incentives are being given to voluntary organisations to help with insulation

programmes for homes in the public sector? Will the Secretary of State say something about alternative energy schemes; in particular, about the possibility of a barrage on the River Mersey to save other forms of energy?

Mr. Walker: The Mersey barrage scheme is being examined. I cannot make any statement about it. We have managed to create many more voluntary groups involved in insulation. At the moment more than 200 voluntary groups are operating and over 130,000 homes have been insulated.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Facilities

42. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he has any plans to increase the current range and level of support facilities for hon. Members; and if he will make a statement.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): No, Sir. The present arrangements do, however, review those facilities from time to time.

Mr. Kennedy: I thank the Leader of the House for that helpful reply. Does he agree with the impression of many hon. Members on both sides of the House, that our constituents are frequently surprised by our lack of facilities and accommodation here and in our constituencies, and the bad effect that that has on us trying to provide a good standard of services for them? In view of that, will he, in the short term, consider more ways in which the range of facilities and office accommodation for hon. Members can be improved, because such space would be put to good use?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that I can helpfully comment on the reasons which cause our constituents to judge the quality of our performance. A review of the secretarial, research and office equipment allowance should be under way this summer. Accommodation is the subject of a later question.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who have come, as I have, from the City, where we are used to a professional level of services, now find ourselves having to work four to a room, 20 ft by 10 ft? Does he accept that it is about time the House became more professional, knocked down that hideous collection of old buildings above the tube station and built proper accommodation for Members of Parliament?

Mr. Biffen: I have always felt that Westminster provided a generous refuge for those from the City. There has never been a shortage of those wishing to make the pilgrimage. Phase one of the Bridge street site should be completed by 1990, and I believe that it will have some impact.

Mr. Soley: Does the Leader of the House know of any other country in the developed world which has a system as backward as ours? Does he realise the situation that I am in today—my secretary is off sick so no one can reach me on the telephone; I have an office by Westminster abbey; when my secretary is not sick she is down by the Embankment and there is a 15-minute walk between the three; and I am having money transferred regularly every month from my salary to my expense allowance to pay for the new technology which he and the House say is a good idea?

Mr. Biffen: Despite that litany of misfortune, I know of no Parliament half the equal of this one.

Mr. Stokes: Will my right hon. Friend be extremely careful when he considers further facilities for right hon. and hon. Members, because we seem to have had a host of new people called research assistants since the summer? They have led to an enormous number of written questions. If we are not careful, we will all drown in a sea of paper.

Mr. Biffen: As I have already explained to the House, there is every likelihood that a review of the secretarial, research and office equipment allowance will be undertaken in June. I look forward to reading the evidence which my hon. Friend will doubtless contribute to it.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that many of us were better serviced by research and secretarial officers in local government before we came here? Does he agree that the problem is that those who do not need extra servicing are so dominant that they prevent better servicing for those who need it?

Mr. Biffen: I must confess that I have a genuine and high regard for the quality of the Opposition in the House. I am not sure that it would be enhanced by further provision of research assistants. The hon. Gentleman will be able to make his case when he gives evidence to the review that will be undertaken later this year.

Palace of Westminster (Cleaning)

43. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Lord Privy Seal what representations he has received about the results of the programme for cleaning the exterior of the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Biffen: This is, of course, the subject of an early-day motion signed by a number of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Chapman: However costly it might be to clean up the exterior of the Palace, does my right hon. Friend agree that that is the best possible investment for the country in terms of tourism, and especially in restoring the pride of our people in their glorious Victorian architectural heritage?

Mr. Biffen: Yes; I very much agree with that sentiment.

Mr. Boyes: Is the Leader of the House aware that those of us who work in an occasionally water-logged slum called the Cloisters are more interested in the inside rather than the outside of the building being put right? If I thought that the Conservative party would be in government long enough, I would ask him if, in future, he would make that his priority.

Mr. Biffen: I worked in the Cloisters for many more years than the hon. Gentleman is ever likely to. I should be very happy to come down and do a reunion meeting and a site inspection.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. Friend note that Conservative Members are extremely happy at the excellence of the outside of the building? Will he have a

word with somebody to ensure that the pig sty between this building and our offices elsewhere is cleaned up? Westminster city council allows it to become a cesspit for all visitors to this place to see.

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that that falls within my responsibilities, but I shall look into the matter and be in touch with my hon. Friend.

Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Tier

44. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will now make a statement on the establishment of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier.

Mr. Biffen: Consideration of this matter continues.

Mr. Dubs: I think that the Leader of the House has already answered my question—nothing seems to be happening. There is a great deal of support for the establishment of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier, but Ministers continually say that it is a matter for Parliament. When we approach the only Minister who can enable things to happen in this House, he says, "Well, it will happen some time." Could we please make some progress, or when the Leader of the House has ceased to be the Leader of the House still nothing will have happened?

Mr. Biffen: Perhaps that will be my contribution to posterity. Discussions between the parties are taking place. Most Irish matters are ones in regard to which speed can be just as dangerous as sloth.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I have an idea. If the parliamentary tier were added to the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council, could we not then be rid of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, which is the cause of so much trouble in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that will be one of the many considerations that will weigh with the inter-party talks.

Mr. Alton: What is the status of the discussions that the right hon. Gentleman says have taken place with the other parties on the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier? Has he taken account of the 46 signatures to the early-day motion tabled by the hon. Member for Hampshire, East (Mr. Mates), asking for the tier to be established? Will he take the opportunity this week, with the visit of the Taoiseach to Westminster, to initiate talks to establish the Anglo-Irish parliamentary tier?

Mr. Biffen: The answer to the first part of the question is informal, the answer to the second part is yes, and the answer to the third is it will not be necessary because talks are already under way.

Mr. Pavitt: Will the Leader of the House discuss these matters with the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), who led a successful all-party group to Ireland last year as chairman of the Inter-parliamentary Union? Should not the IPU be involved in any tier that might be created?

Mr. Biffen: That is a very reasonable comment. I shall be very happy to get in touch with my hon. Friend.

Members' Offices

45. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the progress made in improving office accommodation for hon. Members.

Mr. Biffen: Substantial improvements depend on the completion of phase 1 of the new parliamentary building, which is scheduled for 1990. In addition, the Services Committee has recently published proposals for the use of the former Cannon Row police station, which it is hoped will be ready for parliamentary use by October 1987.

Mr. Dormand: Will the building programme remain within the timetable that has been set for it?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that phase 1 of the programme is on time.

Mr. Marlow: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members believe that nothing could be more damaging to the work of this House than for hon. Members to lock themselves away all the time in brand new executive-style offices?

Mr. Biffen: It would depend on which hon. Members.

Mr. Frank Cook: As Cannon Row police station has been judged to be unacceptable for the accommodation of police constables, what kind of budget has been allocated to making it worthy of accommodating hon. Members?

Mr. Biffen: Not quite sufficient to make it suitable for the accommodation of secretaries.

Press Accommodation

46. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will list the accommodation made available specifically for the use of members of the press accredited to the Palace of Westminster; and what proportion this represents of all accommodation made available to outside organisations.

Mr. Biffen: The parliamentary Press Galley premises include some 34 offices, writing off and refreshment rooms which represent approximately 36 per cent. of the accommodation allocated to outside organisations within the Palace of Westminster.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied that all members of the press and of the press lobby have equal access to and facilities for dealing with hon. Members? Is my right hon. Friend able to say whether these premises are being put to the maximum use, or whether other areas of the Palace of Westminster could be handed over to hon. Members who would prefer to be in this part of the Palace rather than in the precincts?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend raises a wide number of questions. My judgment is that these premises are being put to full use. There has been a long tradition that *The Times* has a room of its own, although I do not know whether that will outlive the new technology.

CIVIL SERVICE

Ethnic Minority School Leavers

50. **Mr. Janner** asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether he has now explored ways of giving further encouragement to ethnic minority school leavers to apply for Civil Service posts.

The Minister of State, Privy Council Office and the Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): A study by Social and Community Planning Research of the attitudes of ethnic minority school leavers towards Civil Service employment is currently in progress in London, Manchester and Leeds.

Mr. Janner: Without awaiting the results of the survey, does the Minister not know that the proportion and number of successful applications for Civil Service posts by people from the ethnic minorities is very small, so much so that many of them believe that it is not worth while applying? Surely steps ought to be taken at once to give people a fair chance and to take positive action in accordance with the code of the Commission for Racial Equality.

Mr. Luce: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, this Government and the Civil Service Departments are committed to being equal opportunity employers. That is important. It will take some months before we know the outcome of a series of surveys that are being undertaken to establish the degree of discrimination. In the meantime, we have drawn the attention of community relations councils to the need to ensure that the ethnic minorities are aware of the recruitment procedures and how to apply for recruitment to the Civil Service.

Mr. Forth: Can my right hon. Friend reaffirm that the sole principle of recruitment to the civil and public service in all its forms will be merit and ability and that no other criteria will be admitted?

Mr. Luce: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Minister accept that those of us who are anxious to increase the numbers of ethnic minorities in the public service are nevertheless concerned that ethnic monitoring might take such a form as to be capable of being traced back to an individual member of an ethnic minority? Will the Minister give an undertaking that whatever kind of ethnic monitoring is used, it will not be possible for it to be traced back in due course to an individual?

Mr. Luce: I can confirm that the heart of the scheme is that it should be operated on a voluntary, self-classification basis.

Mr. Hickmet: When encouraging school leavers to enter the Civil Service, whether from the ethnic minority groups or elsewhere, does my right hon. Friend appreciate that if more Civil Service departments were to leave London and go to the regions that would provide a greater opportunity for all school leavers, whatever their ethnic origins?

Mr. Luce: My hon. Friend knows that there is a policy to disperse civil servants outside London. The programme of dispersing 5,900 civil servants to the regions has not yet been completed.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend visit the local Department of Health and Social Security office in Leicester, where he will see large numbers of members of the ethnic communities already active and working well there? Are they not, therefore, already applying for jobs? Perhaps the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) has not visited those offices and spotted the large number of members of the ethnic communities who are already working there.

Mr. Luce: I am encouraged to hear my hon. Friend's evidence. No national statistics are available, because we do not make surveys that are based on ethnic origin. There is a clear policy of equal opportunity in the Civil Service.

Westland plc (FDA Representations)

51. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Minister for the Civil Service what representations have been received by Her Majesty's Government from the First Division Association of Civil Servants about relations between Ministers and civil servants during the Westland affair.

Mr. Luce: None, Sir.

Mr. Dalyell: May I ask the Minister a question of which I gave his office notice last Wednesday in the hope of a considered reply? Is it the view of Her Majesty's Government that Sir Robert Armstrong's guidelines are sufficient? If Ministers start criticising the professionalism of civil servants for lack of understanding, even high flying civil servants will take that as a professional insult. Should there not be a method whereby civil servants can defend themselves in public if they are to be named and criticised in public?

Mr. Luce: I appreciate the fact that the hon. Gentleman told me in advance what his question was about. I understand the nature of the question. As I said in answer to a question that the hon. Gentleman posed some months ago, I consider that the guidelines established by Sir Robert Armstrong—the restatement of principle—which deal with the matter of conscience, which allow for various procedures to be followed if a civil servant is worried about his position and his conscience, and which are applicable right up to the post of permanent secretary are adequate. The hon. Gentleman probably knows that the Sub-Committee of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service is looking at the relationship between Ministers and civil servants, and it may be that the hon. Gentleman would wish to give evidence to the Committee.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Will the Minister be prepared to look at the findings of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service when they come forward and to think again about the adequacy of those rules? Do not the events surrounding the Westland affair illustrate the fact that civil servants are sometimes put in dreadful dilemmas when collective responsibility breaks down? Does the Minister agree that this area needs to be covered more adequately than it is covered by the Armstrong guidelines?

Mr. Luce: Of course I attach importance to the work of the Select Committee and will study with great care what it has to say in its recommendations. As I have said, I consider that the guidelines laid down are adequate. They allow for questions of conscience by any civil servant to be dealt with through internal procedures up to the level of permanent secretary. The Select Committee is looking at this matter, and I wait with great interest to hear what it has to say.

Mr. Forman: Can my right hon. Friend say whether the Armstrong guidelines, to which he and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) have referred, are mandatory, or discretionary, upon Departments?

Mr. Luce: Those are established guidelines which every Department is expected to follow. A point that I have not made hitherto is that at the end of the day it is Ministers, not civil servants, who are accountable for policies. The relationship between civil servants and Ministers is clearly established in the guidelines.

Mr. Winnick: Is the Minister aware that civil servants are worried because of the way in which Ministers, including the Prime Minister, have put the responsibility on civil servants for the leaking of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence? Is that not a most unfortunate practice? Should not the Prime Minister accept the responsibility instead of putting it on to the private secretary in her office and on to the director of information in the Department of Trade and Industry?

Mr. Luce: In the light of all that has happened, we have seen a fine example of ministerial accountability in the actions of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan).

Mr. Marlow: If any civil servant has been less than competent in his or her advice or action during the Westland affair, will action eventually be taken against him or her, or is it just politicians who always have to take the blame for everything?

Mr. Luce: It is absolutely right that the principle of ministerial accountability should be at the heart of our system, and I am a firm believer in that. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) knows, disciplinary procedures are available in the service, and they are brought into action as and when necessary.

Dr. McDonald: I am glad to hear the Minister's last remarks. In view of what he has said, will he admit that during the Westland affair civil servants have all too often been made to carry the can for the Government's responsibility? Will he consult his ministerial colleagues to see whether the Government can go beyond the Armstrong guidelines and introduce a code of ethics which will make clear the distinction between a civil servant's responsibility to the Government of the day and his responsibility to higher duties?

Mr. Luce: I know that some, including the hon. Lady, take the view that some sort of code of ethics should be developed, but it is exceedingly difficult to know on what basis one could anticipate every set of circumstances in the relationship between a Minister and his civil servants. I believe that the guideline procedures are perfectly adequate.

Mr. Beith: If the civil servants who have been publicly blamed are not to be disciplined, as the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) suggests, ought they not to be publicly exonerated?

Mr. Luce: The principle at the heart of this discussion is ministerial accountability, and we have seen a fine example of that in the past few weeks.

Mr. Boyes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ryman: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order in their usual place, after the private notice questions.

Mr. Boyes: My point of order arises out of Question Time.

Mr. Speaker: I know, but I will take points of order after the private notice questions.

British Leyland

3.30 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on BL subsidiary companies in view of the increasing number of rival bids to acquire them.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): The aim of the Government and of the BL board is to secure an internationally competitive United Kingdom commercial vehicle industry, and to improve the long-term prospects for BL's constituent business.

As I informed the House on 3 February, discussions are at an advanced stage between BL and General Motors in respect of Leyland Trucks, Land Rover, Freight Rover and certain related overseas operations. Discussions are also taking place with the Laird Group about the future of Leyland Bus.

I can confirm to the House that, of the companies that are willing to have their interest in the businesses made public, Lonrho is in contact with BL concerning Land Rover and Freight Rover; Aveling Barford has expressed an interest in Land Rover and Leyland Bus; and Volvo has expressed an interest also in Leyland Bus. Proposals for a management buy-out are also expected to come before the board.

The Government and the BL board will consider other proposals on their commercial merits in relation to the future of BL as a whole.

Mr. Smith: Is the Secretary of State not aware of the growing puzzlement, concern and dismay in this country that the Government appear to be presiding over an auction of some of the best of British industry? Can he tell us clearly why this is happening at all? Why is it necessary for this to be going on?

When it seems to make sense to General Motors to acquire Leyland Vehicles and Land Rover, when it seems to make sense to Lonrho to bid for Land Rover, when it seems to make sense to Aveling Barford to make a bid, and when it makes sense to Volvo to acquire Leyland Bus, why on earth does it not make sense to British Leyland to retain and develop these valuable assets in the British interest?

Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us what view the Government take about General Motors buying Jaguar shares with a view to acquiring that company, which, if the deal with BL that we are told is well advanced goes through, will mean that General Motors will, in more or less one operation, acquire a whole clutch of vital British interests and successes?

Does the Secretary of State not think that he should raise the question in the Cabinet later in the week, in the hope that the political results of his folly will be borne in upon his colleagues and this dishonourable sellout will be brought to an end?

Mr. Channon: As usual, the right hon. and learned Gentleman is interested only in trying to cause the maximum amount of trouble, without considering — [*Interruption.*] The attitude of the Opposition, in laughing at that, proves my point. They are not trying to consider the commercial future of the industries and the people who work in them; they are merely trying to get the maximum political capital out of them. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish".] That is typical of the Opposition, with their irresponsible, hopeless and vindictive attitude.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the skilful way in which he has attracted British bids for BL and its subsidiaries. Will he give an undertaking that those bids will be considered entirely on their merits?

Mr. Channon: Yes. As I told the House on 12 February, and as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said, we will consider these bids.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does the Secretary of State agree that there is, or ought to be, a clear distinction between foreign ownership of the British car industry, or parts of it, and foreign participation or participation and co-operation, such as already exists between, for example, BL and Honda? In that connection, will the right hon. Gentleman register our surprise that the board of the Land Rover company did not know of the General Motors deal that was being stitched up until it became public?

Will the right hon. Gentleman give the House an assurance that if the Government are determined to go ahead with the privatisation—we assume that they are—they will give a fair wind and priority to bids from British concerns and participation and cooperative ventures from foreign concerns that do not involve foreign takeover of the companies?

Mr. Channon: I am surprised at what the right hon. Gentleman says about Land Rover. The BL board has always been in favour of the General Motors' proposals, provided that the assurances which I outlined to the House last week can be obtained to get the best possible results for BL subsidiaries. As I have told the House on many occasions, I am trying to get the best solutions for these companies, and, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions, we shall naturally consider the other bids.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): As the talks between General Motors and BL Trucks are to do with livelihood of thousands of people who want to work in a successful British truck company, is my right hon. Friend able to say whether there have been any signs from General Motors as to how long negotiations are likely to continue?

Mr. Channon: I confirm what my hon. Friend said in the first part of his question. As I have said before, it is in the interests of all concerned in the industry that these negotiations should come to a successful end as soon as they conceivably can, so that we can remove the damaging uncertainty and the worries. I hope that the talks will come to a conclusion soon.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Is it not a fact that BL, under public ownership, had a fine record of ordering components from British firms? Could not this record be put in jeopardy if either of the alternative sell-offs proposed by the Government should go ahead? Can the right hon. Gentleman give any guarantee that, if BL is sold off, such purchases will continue?

Mr. Channon: I have already been through the assurances with the House on a number of occasions and, clearly, satisfactory assurances will have to be obtained.

[Mr. Channon]

In spite of the great progress that has been made, we must face the fact that Leyland Vehicles lost £61 million in 1984, on top of £70 million in 1983, that Land Rover is only just in profit, and that there is a serious commercial problem which the House should address seriously.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): During his negotiations, will my right hon. Friend look carefully at the position of Freight Rover, which is an exceedingly profitable part of the Leyland Land Rover organisation? In particular, in the event of a sell-off, whether to Lonrho or anybody else, will he pay particlar attention to the 300 Austin dealers, who will not have a light van to sell, and to the number of component suppliers in the west midlands who may, as a result of any sale, find their sales of components jeopardised?

Mr. Channon: We shall consider all the points that my hon. Friend makes, and I am sure he will agree that, in the interests of all dealers and everybody else concerned, we should get a speedy and satisfactory conclusion, to provide a good long-term future for these businesses.

Mr. Terry Davies (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): How do the Government intend to consult those who work at BL?

Mr. Channon: There will be talks with the employees through the usual consultation machinery.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Grateful though my right hon. Friend will no doubt be for the helpful intervention of Mr. Rowland of Lonrho, will he resist that blandishment? Land Rover already has a satisfactory market in the middle east and Africa. Is not Land Rover's greatest need for major opportunities to sell in the United States of America—something that one of the options at which my right hon. Friend is looking will provide?

Mr. Channon: It is the case that if the General Motors deal goes ghrough, one of the major attractions will be the opportunites that will be available in the United States.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is the Secretary of State aware that my attempts to promote a joint venture, and my invitation to Volvo to visit the BL plant in my constituency was blocked by a member of the BL board? Is he aware that the meetings that I arranged this week with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, with the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry with two senior Leyland Bus managers, including the managing director of Leyland Bus, was blocked once again by a member of the BL board? Will he remove these blocks and ensure that when proposals for a management buy-out in Leyland Bus are submitted, they will be given the fullest possible consideration by members of the board—that is, in the event that the Minister insists on pressing on down this route?

Mr. Channon: I assure the hon. Gentleman that any such proposals will be considered on their merits. Volvo has expressed an interest in Leyland Bus, which will be carefully considered. The Minister of State is to meet the hon. Gentleman later this week, with the managers to whom he referred. I hope that I have given satisfactory answers on all three points.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of us welcome the first few words of his statement, in which he said that his aim was to have a viable industry? That is right. Does he further accept that the lorry industry's problems, both General Motors' and BL's, are different from those of Land Rover and Freight Rover? Is it not a good idea to separate the two? In view of the interest by Aveling and Lonrho—and I believe, by others—in Land Rover, surely there is no reason to offer a sweetener. If my hon. Friend must sell, why not have a proper auction, so that everyone knows that for once the country is getting the right price?

Mr. Channon: I am fully aware of my hon. Friend's views. I assure him that in any solution that comes forward in due course I shall bear in mind what he has said. I am particularly anxious to ensure the best possible future, not only for the freight business, but for Land Rover itself. That is one of the prime aims of the consultations and discussions.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will consultations with the work forces be held before, or after, any deals are completed?

Mr. Channon: I have already answered that.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the recovery plan for Land Rover is seen to be working and that vital steps have been taken at Land Rover to put it on a promising and prosperous road? If that continues just a little longer, could we not have a promising flotation, like that for Jaguar?

Mr. Channon: That is possible. Although there has been a great deal of progress in Land Rover, there is a great deal further to go. In 1984 Land Rover's United Kingdom turnover was £490 million, but its profits were only £2 million, following a loss of £14 million the year before. A serious commercial problem must be addressed.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): I accept that public money has gone into Land Rover and Freight Rover, but now that part of BL is emerging into profitability and has good prospects, would it not make more sense to allow the taxpayer to have the benefits, indirectly through the Treasury, than hive off the company so that the benefits go to Detroit?

Mr. Channon: I note what the hon. Gentleman says, but I repeat that I am trying to find a solution that is in the long term interests of Land Rover and Freight Rover.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I sympathise with my right hon. Friend in the problems that he had to pick up when he took over his new job, but does he remember telling me the other day that he had received no other bids or expressions of interest other than from General Motors? Will ne now make it clear that he welcomes this widening of interest? In view of the warfare between predecessors in his Department and Lonrho, will he ensure that new interests are considered even-handedly with everyone else?

Mr. Channon: I have made it clear to the House that all serious proposals will be considered on their merits.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Does the Minister recall that over 20 years ago when a previous Conservative Government agreed to the sale of Rootes to Chrysler a number of assurances were given that were not worth the paper on which they were written? Since the sale of a

profitable British company is a matter of great concern, why can we not have a ballot of workers to allow them to determine the future of the company, whose wealth they have created through their own labour?

Mr. Channon: The right hon. Gentleman is right. I, too, recall similar declarations in the past, and that is very much in my mind. The usual consultation will take place with the work force.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the people of Luton see real potential advantages from a merger between General Motors and the truck division of BL?

Mr. Channon: I appreciate what my hon. and learned Friend has said. We want a solution that will help, not hinder, the prospects of all sections of that business.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Secretary of State accept that the Opposition speak for the national interest, the interests of the lorry industry, the interests of the Leyland workers and, unlike some in this House, the interests of those who work in Luton?

The right hon. Gentleman said that Leyland Commercial Vehicles was not profitable, that the bus company was not profitable and that Land Rover has only just broken into profitability. Can he explain, therefore, why so many people want to buy those vehicles? Now that taxpayers' money has been put into that business, will he reconsider and allow it to move forward as a financial success in public ownership?

Mr. Channon: I have given the House the figures for the losses in the truck division for 1983 and 1984. I do not have the 1985 figures, which will be published in the usual way when they are available.

Great progress has been made in Land Rover and other parts of BL. However, the House is deluding itself if it imagines that the problems are over, that hard decisions can be avoided, or that there is some magic road down which we can go without making difficult choices.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot continue to kid ourselves all the time, and that it is about time that the management and work force of BL reached the conclusion that they have to produce the goods in competition with Japan and other countries? If they reach that conclusion, perhaps they will produce quality goods that can compete fairly in world markets.

Mr. Channon: Substantial strides have already been made. If we can, we must achieve an increasing share of the market and a solution that is in the long-term interests of all the companies in the BL group.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I thank the Minister of State for his courteous attitude towards my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) and myself when we visited him last Wednesday to discuss the problems of Bathgate.

Is there not a dilemma, in that millions of pounds of public money have been poured into the huge Bathgate site by the West Lothian district council, the Scottish Office and the right hon. Gentleman's Department? Therefore, should not the district council and the civil servants in the Scottish Office and the Department have some say in the future of that site? Surely that should not be left entirely to a commercial decision by Leyland Vehicles? A moral issue is involved in determining the future of that site that affects the whole of central Scotland.

Mr. Channon: As the hon. Gentleman knows, decisions on Bathgate were taken some considerable time ago. Nothing that I have said today or on earlier occasions changes the position. The hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) raised important points with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, and those matters will receive careful consideration.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in large measure, BL's problems stem from the Labour Government's encouragement of a merger in 1968 between Leyland and the British Motor Corporation and the number of plants that were kept open? Does he further agree that it is not the business of the Government to build motor cars? However, if there is to be a disposal, would it not be more sensible, if possible, to sell to a British bidder rather than to a foreign bidder?

Mr. Channon: I had better not delve into the history of BL. Strong views are held in many quarters of the House on the issues that my hon. Friend raised. I am trying to achieve the best possible solution for the future of the subsidiary companies. I shall inform the House when negotiations are completed.

Mr. Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Why does the Secretary of State continue to talk down the achievements of Land Rover? Does he not agree that it has made profits every year, barring 1983, since it was established in 1948? Is he not aware that in its interim statement BL forecast greater profits than those about which the right hon. Gentleman has just told the House and, that it has now achieved record sales? Is he aware that we are not asking for a magic solution, but simply for the same solution for Land Rover that Jaguar had in the past?

Mr. Channon: I am not in the least talking Land Rover down. I have said again and again, and I repeat in case there is any doubt, that the Land Rover products are excellent. They have a worldwide reputation, of which all those involved can be proud. What I must do is to give the House the actual figures, and those that I have given the House this afternoon show the company's financial position.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): If we have excellent British products and if we have had recent improvement, why the hurry to flog off BL?

Mr. Channon: Because, as I told the House last week, there are serious commercial problems in many of the companies. We must try to get them on to a basis of certainty for the future. *[Interruption.]* I am extremely surprised that the Opposition would like this damaging uncertainty to go on—the damaging uncertainty which has largely been created by the irresponsible tactics of the Opposition.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Why does the Secretary of State deliberately set out to rubbish the achievements of BL, and Leyland Trucks in particular, and of the thousands of people who work in the company, as he has done from the Dispatch Box this afternoon, when last month the figures issued by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders showed that Leyland was at the

[Mr. Jack Straw]

top of the league for the sale of heavy trucks and that General Motors' Bedford subsidiary had slipped to fifth place? What is in it for Leyland to be taken over by the failing General Motors? What information has the right hon. Gentleman of General Motors' plans to produce a world lorry, which would seriously undermine any design and development capability of Leyland Trucks?

Mr. Channon: I have in no sense rubbished the achievements of Leyland Vehicles. *[Interruption.]* I certainly have not. If it is rubbishing the achievements of Leyland Vehicles to tell the truth about the figures, that is astonishing. The House should recognise that there is immense over-capacity in this area. There are serious commercial problems and substantial losses between Leyland Vehicles—£61 million in 1984 and £70 million in 1983. To imagine that those problems can be wished away by a magic wand is simply ridiculous.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. I regret that I cannot call everyone, but I shall ensure that those who are not called get preference when we discuss the matter again.

Mr. John Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is my intention to move an application under Standing Order No. 10 in view of the inadequate response that we have received from the Secretary of State and his deliberate evasion of a number of important questions. May I have your advice on when I should do so?

Mr. Speaker: At the appropriate time, which is after private notice questions.

Exceptionally Severe Weather Payments

3.53 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if in the light of the recent decision of the Social Security Commissioners he will make a statement about fuel payments in periods of exceptionally severe weather like the recent cold snap.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The main help for claimants in meeting their heating costs is the scale rates which cover normal living expenses. In addition, there is an extensive range of heating additions which give further help, for example, for all householders over 65 and families with a child under five. Expenditure on those additions totalled some £400 million in 1984-85—£140 million more in real terms than in 1978-79.

The regulations also provide for single payments to claimants who have extra fuel costs arising from exceptionally severe weather. Last winter decisions were handled using trigger points based on meteorological office information. The system was widely criticised and was ruled invalid by the Social Security Commissioners last autumn. In the light of this the chief adjudication officer issued further guidance on the handling of claims.

It is for the independent adjudication officers in each locality to decide whether there has been a period of exceptionally severe weather and to determine subsequent claims. I understand that some designations have been made and that others are under consideration.

Mr. Meacher: Now that the Social Security Commissioners have ruled that the Government's system of exceptionally severe weather payments of last winter was invalid, is it not an abdication of Government responsibility that the buck has been passed to local officers to decide for themselves whether there has been a period of exceptionally severe weather and, if so, how much extra claimants should have to spend on fuel? Are the Government not washing their hands of this matter in issuing a circular that does not define "period", "exceptionally severe weather" and "trigger points"? Which local offices have so far started making payments according to the circular of 6 December, as the temperature has now fallen as low as minus 11 deg in Scotland and the north-east and minus 17 deg in the Cambridge area? Why are local officers apparently not advertising the availability of these payments, bearing in mind that it has now been freezing for some weeks?

As the previous standardised system notoriously led to unequal treatment of different places with the same low temperature, is it not clear that the present wholly random alternative will lead to far greater inequities and unfairnesses? Are we not seeing the first example of that abandonment of claimants' rights in favour of local discretion and uncertainty which will soon become the order of the day under the Government's proposed social fund?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has not acknowledged that the position last winter was, in one important respect, the same as this winter. The decision has always been a matter for the local adjudication officers. The

difference is that, last winter, local adjudication officers were given guidance by the Chief Adjudication Officer setting out generalised national standards for the application of the scheme. It was that guidance, purporting to guide local adjudication officers, that was found invalid by the Social Security Commissioners. Their finding was that the regulation could be operated only on the basis of individual local decisions by the local adjudication officers. The Chief Adjudication Officer has simply responded to the finding of the appropriate legal authority — in this case, the Social Security Commissioners. I think I need not tell the House what the hon. Gentleman would have said if the finding of the Social Security Commissioners had been ignored. The finding has simply been implemented by the Chief Adjudication Officer.

The hon. Gentleman asked me whether I could say in which areas a period of exceptionally severe weather had been declared for the purposes of this regulation. We are aware of designations in Northampton, Peterborough, Hertford, Cambridge — to which the hon. Gentleman referred — the Greater London area as a whole, Mansfield and Sutton in Ashfield. I understand that designations are under consideration in a number of other areas.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, since 1979, not only has the scale payment been increased in real terms but its spread has been increased?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We are spending substantially more on regular weekly additional payments than when the Conservative party came to office — £400 million, which is £140 million more in real terms than in 1978-79. Those regular weekly additions which now go to all supplementary pensioner householders over 65 and to a number of other groups are a much more important source of support for heating payments than the system of single payments which last year resulted in the payment of only about £1·7 million in benefit at an administration cost of £1 million. That is plainly not a satisfactory system.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I am amazed at the audacity of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) in raising the matter when, as a Minister 10 years ago, he suppressed information on hypothermia. Does the Minister not think it a scandal that for the second year running the Scots have been refused payment of the severe weather allowance whereas it has been made available in the south and midlands of England? Is he not aware that one quarter of all the deaths from hypothermia occur in Scotland? How much do the Scots have to take from this Government before we are given adequate heating allowances based on climatic differences.

Mr. Newton: I know that the hon. Gentleman had, what I hope, was a fruitful meeting with my hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), the Under-Secretary. We shall continue to give consideration to the points he made. He also knows that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, is examining the information available about hypothermia and death, which requires a good deal of careful examination. I can only say that the dissatisfaction expressed in Scotland last year was no doubt one of the things taken into account by the social security commissioners when they looked at the operation of the regulation. We have faithfully adhered to the guidance of the proper legal authorities about how that regulation should be administered this winter.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Does my hon. Friend accept that a system of payment which does not provide for a prompt indication as to whether payments are to be made and does not give a clear idea as to how much will be paid is not a particularly helpful system? Will my hon. Friend accept that the present system is deficient in both respects?

Mr. Newton: I accept that. I think that last winter I used the phrase "weird and wonderful" to describe to the House the system then. We have considered what would be the appropriate action. In the light of the social security commissioners' finding last autumn we felt that it would be appropriate to implement the commissioners' recommendation for the proper way to implement the existing regulation and to continue to keep the matter under review in the light of what happens this winter.

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On last Tuesday and Wednesday it was minus 11 deg C in central Scotland, plus a high wind bringing a hill chill factor. How cold does it have to be before my constituents qualify for the allowance?

Mr. Newton: It is inherent in the nature of the system that the only person who can answer that is the local adjudication officer in the hon. Gentleman's area. I suggest that he makes his points direct to him.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Will my hon. Friend consider increasing a little further the spread of the general heating allowance in order that in some circumstances we may be able to include those who are not already on supplementary benefit?

Mr. Newton: I will consider my hon. Friend's suggestion, but we have always felt that the appropriate course was to focus help most clearly on those who are identified as the least well off in the community, which is those on supplementary benefit. To that end we have made the very substantial increase in the amount and the spread of heating additions which I have already described.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): As hundreds and thousands of our constituents are suffering misery from the cold to the extent that some will die, will the Minister give an undertaking that he will seek radio and television time to tell constituents what help is available and how to claim?

Mr. Newton: I shall undertake that in areas where a period of exceptionally severe weather is declared we shall take steps to bring that to the attention of claimants. Indeed, as a result of the arrangements made last winter, local officers have stocks of leaflets which describe the help available and we have given them further advice on local publicity arrangements to draw the matters to claimants' attention.

Mr. Peter Rost (Erewash): Does my hon. Friend accept that there would be much less hardship today and savings in public funds if the Government had taken the advice of the Select Committee on Energy. The Committee said that there should be more insulation of low-income family homes and that it should be speeded up

[Mr. Peter Rost]

now because it will be more cost-effective than wasting huge sums of taxpayers' money paying people's heating bills.

* **Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend will know that that is a matter for my right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Energy and one which they take very seriously. I can also tell the House that we are anxious to work closely with the Department of Energy to promote insulation.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Why should so many pensioners throughout the country have to endure such intense misery during the present cold spell while there are red-tape regulations about triggering off the special payments? Is the Minister aware that, although he tells the House that that is a matter for local DHSS officers, that is not the position? I have made inquiries and it seems that the responsibility in practice is being taken by regional offices. Is the Minister aware that there are other groups of people, certainly pensioners on very small incomes, who do not receive a penny of supplementary benefit and are therefore not eligible for the payment which can be made during the winter or for any other form of payment to help pay their heating bills? Is that not disgraceful and will it not become even worse when the Social Security Bill becomes law?

Mr. Newton: The legal position is, and always has been, that it is a matter for the local adjudication officer to decide on local conditions. It is equally open to adjudication officers, on these or any other matters, to seek guidance from adjudication officers further up the system. On the other matter, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that this regulation is effectively simply a translation into a regulated form of the discretionary power previously exercised by the Supplementary Benefits Commission. To that extent, the policy of focusing help on those on supplementary benefit has been common to both Administrations.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that it seems to many of us that the Government's entirely honourable and good intentions are being frustrated by the arbitrary and often insensitive behaviour of the local adjudication officers? May we not have a temperature guideline so that we do not have the ridiculous problem whereby when it is minus 11 deg. people are getting no form of benefit?

Mr. Newton: The problem, as my hon. Friend may perhaps understand, is that the attempts to lay down clear national guidelines last winter by the Chief Adjudication Officer were precisely what was attacked in the House at that time and subsequently found by the social security commissioners to be invalid.

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): When experts estimate that at least 1,000 lives are being lost every month as a result of the cold and 900,000 pensioners are at risk, how does the Minister justify refusing benefit when temperatures are as low as minus 11 deg. in Scotland and the north-east? Why, if there is local discretion, do the new rules which he has sent out state that benefit will be cut if there is sickness in the family or if a pensioner has bought a new heater? Why do the Government put saving money before saving lives?

Mr. Newton: I state as a fact to the House that the circular is that of the Chief Adjudication Officer and it is not one which Ministers could or should dictate. The Government's concern for the needs of poorer pensioners is precisely why the coverage of regular substantial weekly heating additions has been greatly extended and increased in value by the present Administration.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): If the Government have set their face against the structural approach based on entitlement, which I very much regret, will they consider two modifications? Will they allow claimants to make claims on the basis of unpaid, not receipted, bills? Secondly, will the Minister look at the possibility of getting the fuel boards to provide statistics on which claims can be made? Is he aware that the commissioner's decision in paragraph 24 suggests that fuel boards are asking for fees to provide claimants with information on which to base claims?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly look at the hon. Gentleman's second point. On the first matter, I am afraid that once again I have to say to the House that not only is it a matter for the local adjudication officer to determine whether the regulation applies in a particular area at a particular time, it is for the local adjudication officer to decide the basis on which the calculation of any payment shall be made.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my hon. Friend not agree that it is mystifying as to why the Government are not receiving credit from the Opposition for the substantial increases in real terms in heating additions which have been given by the Government? Will he confirm that nearly all pensioners and disabled people are now benefiting very much more than they ever did under Labour?

Mr. Newton: It is certainly the case that the importance of this particular regulation needs to be placed in the context of the figures — £400 million a year is being spent in regular weekly additions to those who can be thought to have the greatest need. The regulation has been used on only two occasions in the past five years. On the first occasion about £3·6 million was paid out and on the second occasion, last year, about £1·7 million was paid out. Those figures compare with £400 million of regular weekly help which we have given to those in need.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): As the Minister has assured us that there are severe weather conditions — he is not sure where they are — will he take full responsibility for, and instruct local officers, such as those in Sheffield to mount an effective publicity campaign to reassure the 50,000 claimants in Sheffield that they can keep their heating on and will get financial help as soon as possible?

Mr. Newton: I have already said that we have taken steps to try to make sure that local publicity is effective in getting help to claimants, where a period of exceptionally severe weather is declared.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Does my hon. Friend accept that the Treasury Bench does not have a good record on locating Cleveland, and once again it will be difficult to explain why Greater London, instead of the north-east of England, is getting the excess money? While my hon. Friend is answering my question, perhaps he can prompt somebody on the Treasury Bench to reply to the

letter that I wrote drawing attention to the case of one of my constituents. He has lost his heating allowance because he went away and did two weeks in the Territorial Army. Since the change in the regulations on 5 August 1985, such people who were previously on supplementary benefit have lost their benefit simply because they went away to do TA duty.

Mr. Newton: I shall look into my hon. Friend's second point. On his first point, I cannot add to what I said about it being, legally, a matter for local decision.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Minister aware that, whatever new guidance has been issued, the effect is absolutely the same as last winter. As I have confirmed from inquiries that I made in Glasgow today, the colder it is normally, the colder it has to become before the payment can be made. Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate the sense of outrage and injustice in Scotland and elsewhere about this ridiculous regulation?

Mr. Newton: I understand the sense of objection that was expressed in Scotland last year and is being reflected in what is being said today. That is precisely why we shall continue to look at the matter in the light of the new method of administration that has been adopted for this winter.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Does the Minister appreciate that when I rang the Chesterfield office, the officers there said that the weather was not exceptionally severe for this time of the year? Thus they were saying that because it is always cold in February, when it gets exceptionally cold, pensioners and others in the area cannot get the payments that they need. For the Minister to shield behind the local adjudication officers and others is to try to abandon the responsibility that he has to see that people do not die of cold in the winter when, with much trumpeting, we were told that the emergency weather payments would be made. That is the issue. Will the hon. Gentleman address his mind to it and not take us through the bureaucratic maze to confuse people who dare not spend money on heating until they know that they will get the allowance, because they do not want to find that they are in debt later in the winter?

Mr. Newton: The core of the Government's position is that the proper way to help pensioners and others on supplementary benefit who have additional fuel needs is to make sure that they get significant extra help every week. That is what we have sought to do.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): Is the Minister aware that his Pontius Pilate attitude this afternoon contrasts sharply with the written answer that his Department gave me on 22 January, showing that nearly 40,000 more pensionsers died in the winter months of January to March last year compared, with the summer months of July to September the previous year? The only difference is temperature. When will this annual cull of pensioners stop? Is the only hope that the Minister is holding out to pensioners today—the 450 who die every day because of cold—that they will get the payment posthumously?

Mr. Newton: The effect of what the Government have already done for pensioners is to give them help that is signficantly greater than any that they received from the previous Labour Government. In the case of supplementary benefit—*[Interruption.]* The increase in heating additions under the present Government, as I have said on several occasions, is to £400 million. That is an increase of £140 million in real terms since Labour Members were on Government Benches, and, if I remember rightly, it was the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) who invented what was widely regarded as the farcical electricity discount scheme.

Later——

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I never question your choice of speakers to ask questions. Nor am I questioning your not calling Members to ask questions. However, I should like to place on record the fact that it is a matter of great regret that you chose to end questions when only two Opposition Members still wished to speak—my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and myself.

Mr. Speaker: There were rather more than two hon. Members wishing to ask questions, as the hon. Gentlman would have realised had he looked behind him. We had nearly 25 minutes on this matter, and it was an extension of Question Time. Normally, I would not allow more than 15 minutes in such cases.

Colliery Review Procedure

4.16 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during Question Time the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said that of the three Members of Parliament who had been to see Mr. Archibald, the regional director of the north-east region of the National Coal Board, two were Conservatives. I should like to correct the record. On 12 July 1985, 15 members of the Labour party went to see Mr. Archibald. In addition, since that date, several Labour Members have been to the offices of Mr. Archibald. Five weeks ago my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), the secretary of the northern group, asked for another meeting with Mr. Archibald to discuss the future of the north-east coalfield, but it was refused. My hon. Friend has since written asking for another meeting. Somebody somewhere is not telling the truth, but that is correct and it is the truth.

Mr. Speaker: I think that honour has been satisfied.

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If you examine *Hansard* tomorrow, you will see that I said that it was reported to me by the director that only three Members of Parliament had been to visit him at his office. He told me that, and that is what I said. If he has lied to me, I shall be just as aggrieved as is the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes), but I stand by the statement that I made.

Later——

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises directly from a supplementary question answered by the Secretary of State for Energy, on question No. 9—*[Interruption.]* It is a genuine point of order—not a bogus one. The Secretary of State for Energy purported to summarise the recommendation by Peter Bowsher QC in his report, that Bates' colliery in Blyth should not be closed.

Mr. Speaker: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, I think that this is a continuation of Question Time I cannot adjudicate on matters of that kind. The hon. Gentleman must put a point of order which I can answer. I cannot possibly deal with that matter.

Mr. Ryman: With great respect to you, Mr. Speaker, you cannot rule on the validity of a point of order until I have put the point of order, which I have not yet done. My point is that the Secretary of State for Energy's summary, no doubt unwittingly, and no doubt he was doing his incompetent best, was wholly inaccurate. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of principle and guidance for Back Benchers, for future occasions such as this, to say that if a Minister makes an inaccurate statement about a report there should be an opportunity to correct that impression. On this occasion, the best way to do that would be to place a copy of the report in the Library.

Mr. Speaker: This is not a matter for me, and I must say to the hon. Member that this is a continuation of Question Time. Frequently statements are made to the House with which hon. Members disagree, and I cannot give judgments as to whether the statements are totally accurate, inaccurate or absolutely right.

Conventions of the House

4.17 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to refer to the behaviour of the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) last week. Was it in order for him to pass on information which he had received privately about allegations of child sex and pornography on a council estate in my constituency? I raise this point of order because he received a letter from a constituent of mine, as I did, making allegations about a large number of people in my constituency, involving child pornography and abuse.

I wholly deplore child pornography or abuse, and I think that the best way to deal with these matters is through proper and sensitive investigation, which was going on at the time. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth chose, last Thursday, to make a statement to the Press Association, which appeared later in *The London Standard*. The effect was to make any inquiries difficult to follow, and the estate was besieged by the media, seeking salacious gossip and stories.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I should like to ask whether the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth will, in the light of the investigations that have taken place, withdraw the statement that he made, visit that estate and apologise in person to the tenants, to whom he has caused a great deal of personal insult and hurt in the past few days.

I have raised this point of order because constituents of mine are extremely upset by the fact that an hon. Member from another part of the country should behave in such an irresponsible and disgraceful manner, which is not in the best interests of the tenants of that estate, or of the cause that he purports to support.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is a matter for the hon. Member concerned, but I say to the hon. Gentleman and the House that there is a convention in the House that if we propose to raise a matter concerning another Member's constituency, we give him notice of that. That is a convention that we should maintain.

News International Plant, Wapping

4.23 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Mr. Speaker, I gave notice last night that I would beg leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the recent incidents involving the police outside the printing plant owned by Mr. Rupert Murdoch at Wapping."

There can be no doubt as to the specific nature of the incidents directly following from the fact that more than 5,000 print workers were summarily dismissed after working for *The Times*, the *Sunday Times*, the *Sun* and the *News of the World*, and Mr. Murdoch's decision to move the printing of those papers to a fortified establishment surrounded by barbed wire in Wapping.

That brutality of action understandably led to picketing, and demonstrations of protest by those affected who have lost everything, and by their families and friends, who see it as a direct attack upon the rights of workpeople to band themselves together in trade unions to defend their legitimate interests.

The Metropolitan police Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman, who is directly and personally answerable to the Home Secretary and, through him to the House, then decided to bring in the riot police. The commissioner also decided to activate the instructions laid down in the "Police Operations Manual" — extracts of which you, Mr. Speaker, authorised me to place in the Library of the House last year — under which peaceful demonstrators may be attacked without provocation by mounted and foot police, and disabled by the use of truncheons. As a result of that police action, a number of people have been injured and a number of arrests have been made.

Mr. Speaker, the public importance of what has happened here in the heart of London is obvious. First, a foreign national, Mr. Murdoch, has unjustly deprived several thousand employees of their work, income, pensions and redundancy pay. Secondly, those workers have contributed directly to the making of millions of pounds of profits by Mr. Murdoch, money that he has then used to build a new printing plant and so deny them of any benefit from their labour. Finally, the police, instead of standing aside, have been instructed to give 100 per cent. support to Mr. Murdoch and to use violent methods to deny the print workers their right to go to work — *[Interruption.]*

I do not have to emphasise the connection between what is happening at Wapping and similar incidents that occurred during the miners' strike. The difference is that during the miners' strike, the dismissals were on the grounds that the pits were uneconomic, but no one could argue that Mr. Murdoch's enterprises are uneconomic.

During the miners' strike the police were used to allow people to go to work; that is what the print workers at Wapping are pleading for.

I submit that what is taking place is fundamentally unjust, and undermines basic freedoms and civil liberties won by people over many centuries. The House will ignore that injustice at its peril. Good and decent people are being treated disgracefully and I appeal directly and personally to you, Mr. Speaker, to recognise the importance of what is happening and allow an emergency debate on the shameful conduct of Mr. Murdoch and the Ministers, the police and the courts who are supporting him.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the recent incidents involving the police outside the printing plant owned by Mr. Rupert Murdoch at Wapping."

The right hon. Gentleman knows that my only duty in considering that case under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether it should be given priority over the business already set down for this evening or for tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not for me in any way to suggest that you should censor what hon. Members say, but I distinctly heard that idiot, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), acting like a stupid berk. If that is the level of conduct which we have in the House, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to deal with idiots like the hon. Gentleman and allow some proper order in this matter.

Mr. Speaker: As the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Heffer) knows, my microphones were directed to the right hon. Gentleman making the submission. I heard nothing untoward from below the Gangway.

British Leyland

4.27 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the disposal of the various divisions of British Leyland."

The matter is specific because an auction is taking place of defined parts of the British Leyland empire. It is extremely specific for the thousands of employees in the various divisions. The Secretary of State was asked earlier by my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) and for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) whether the employees who have not yet been consulted would be consulted before or after a deal was struck.

It is staggering that the Secretary of State saw fit not to answer a question that goes right to the heart of the matter. We need to debate the matter in the House so that we know the Government's position on that and other issues. I need hardly say, in view of previous exchanges, that the matter is important to hon. Members on both sides of the House and to many parts of the country. It is especially important because it appears that the Government want to sell a company, namely British Leyland Vehicles, on the basis of the results of two years' profits in the middle of a deep recession, although just last week that company reached the top of the league for heavy truck sales in the United Kingdom.

The matter is urgent because it is clear from what the Secretary of State said that a deal with General Motors is all but signed, sealed and delivered. Irrevocable steps may be taken on the basis of assurances satisfactory to an easily satisfied Government but unlikely to be satisfactory to the House.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a matter of specific importance that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the disposal of the various divisions of British Leyland."

I regret that I must give the right hon. and learned Gentleman the same answer as I gave to his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). I do not consider the matter which he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. None of us would wish to challenge your ruling, and I do not do so, but I know that you are aware of the deep concern of many constituents, including mine, about their future and the future of the firms on which they depend. Will you say whether, later this week, you might decide that the matter is so urgent that you will entertain an application under Standing Order No. 10?

Mr. Speaker: That is a purely hypothetical question. I must take into account what other opportunities are available to raise such matters.

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to inform the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Education (Amendment) Act 1986
2. Australia Act 1986
3. Poole Borough Council Act 1986
4. Berkshire Act 1986
5. British Railways Act 1986

COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That the Commonwealth Development Corporation Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

Gas Bill (Allocation of Time)

4.30 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move, That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 6th March 1986.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 6th March may continue until Ten o'clock, whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 7th March.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Seven o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 45 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatiory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be moved to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are to be taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on allotted days

7.—(1) On an allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

[Mr. John Biffen]

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(*a*) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(*b*) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(*c*) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is moved by a member of the Government;

(*d*) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(*a*) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(*b*) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(*a*) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(*b*) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Gas Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

The whole House will be aware of the importance of the Gas Bill to which this motion seeks to apply a timetable. The Bill seeks to benefit managers and employees in the industry, consumers, and all those who will have an opportunity to own a stake in the industry.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy will be able to explain the full merits of the measure more cogently than I could hope to do. I will, however, make this comment. I believe that the Bill typifies the Government's positive attitude to industry. Industry should be freed from the unnecessary constraints imposed upon it by politicians: and freed to enable people to participate directly in its success. It is, of course, a policy to which we are deeply committed. Thus, there is a general expectation that the Bill will complete its procedures in both Houses of Parliament and be enacted in the current Session. The Government must protect their business to ensure that this is so.

Even before the general election in June 1983 we had a clear outline of what we would do. Our 1983 manifesto states:

"In the next Parliament, we shall seek"

means of

"increasing . . . private capital into the gas and electricity industries".

This commitment was renewed in the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament with an explicit undertaking to introduce a measure to permit the transfer of the assets of the British Gas Corporation to the private sector.

Nor is the policy the product of commitment. It has been subject to close and continued examination. Just one month after the election my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy initiated a study by his Department into the feasibility and nature of the privatisation that should take place. In this way, the industry was examined for more than one and a half years before the options and arguments were put to the Cabinet. This measured and considered process resulted in the legislation which was introduced into the House on 28 November.

The proposals have in addition been subjected already to vigorous scrutiny inside Parliament. Consideration of

the Bill so far in Standing Committee is evidence of that. More than 20 hours of debate have been devoted to clause 4 alone: while clause 7 was discussed for just over 30 hours. I do not deny that the Bill deserves careful attention, but on present form only 13 clauses in 85 hours have received this careful attention. I fear that we do not have available the 340 hours in Committee that it would take to consider just as thoroughly the remaining 53 clauses and five schedules to the Bill.

None the less, the timetable motion before us would allow the rest of the Bill to be discussed in Committee in a structured way. If the Committee continued to sit on the same basis as it does at present, there would be time for a further 12 sittings before it had to report to the House. In addition, there can be a debate until midnight on the Floor of the House for the Report stage, and a further three hours for the Third Reading debate.

More generally, I should point out that this is the first timetable motion before us since we have had the benefit of the report of the Select Committee on Procedure on public Bill procedure, which was produced in April last year. In no way do I wish to pre-empt what I know will be a constructive discussion when we debate that report. I hope to provide time for it to be debated in the very near future, but in these circumstances it behoves me to say a few words about the practice of timetabling, as well as about this motion.

One aspect of the present system about which the Committee was most critical was the many hours a Bill could spend in Standing Committee before a timetable motion was moved. It has been argued that this leads to such an uneven distribution of time spent on different provisions of a Bill that the later clauses may receive little or no consideration. I can see some force in this line, but I believe that a balance needs to be struck.

Against this argument there is the view of those, of whom I am one, who believe that we should proceed by informal agreement as far as we can. We should not rush to impose guillotines on Bills on which it is ultimately possible to reach agreement. The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill was controversial, but completed its passage without the need for a timetable motion, despite more than 145 hours in Committee. Similarly, in the last Session, there was the Water (Fluoridation) Bill. Nevertheless, I take note of the Committee's concern that there should be earlier timetable motions to ensure adequate consideration of the later parts of a Bill. In this spirit, I invite the House to take note that this motion is moved after fewer than 90 hours in Standing Committee. That makes it an earlier timetable motion than both of those passed last Session in respect of the Local Government Bill and the Transport Bill.

Measured consideration is not achieved by providing timetable motions which merely allow more hours for debate on the remainder of the Bill, or which are imposed after 50 or 60 hours in Committee instead of 80 or 90. This motion, like previous timetable motions, not only prescribes the date by which the Standing Committee must have reported to the House, but makes provision for the allocation of time in Standing Committee and on the Floor of the House for Report and Third Reading by reference to a Business Committee and a Business Sub-Committee.

The referral to a Business Committee and Sub-Committee is the key to the sensible consideration of the rest of the Bill. It provides an opportunity for those who are experienced in these matters and, in the case of the Sub-Committee, those who are most closely acquainted with the Bill's provisions, to discuss the timing and divide the available hours appropriately between clauses.

When the idea of a Business Committee was put forward by the Labour Government on 4 November 1947, Mr. Chuter Ede, the then Home Secretary, said that the Government were desirous when a guillotine procedure had to be followed that

"both sides should have an opportunity of making an effective contribution towards setting up the Guillotine which is to be operated".—[*Official Report*, 4 November 1947; Vol. 443, c. 1736.]

I assure the House that that is no less the case today. Although we may be sharply divided about the substance of a Bill, I hope we can still agree about the way in which that substance can be properly but expeditiously considered.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I do not think I should detain the House further. I believe that the motion represents a realistic way for us to debate the Gas Bill in the context of the timing constraints which always exist within the parliamentary framework. Nor are those constraints necessarily unwelcome to those outside this Chamber. The gas industry, and a nation of potential shareholders, keenly await the passage of the Bill. I commend the motion to the House.

4.38 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): It is customary for the Leader of the House to open our all-too-frequent guillotine debates with a short speech stating in summary form the purpose of the Bill, often its principal provisions and why the debate that has already taken place in Committee should be curtailed. That familiar pattern was repeated this afternoon, with an interesting postscript about the report of the Select Committee on Procedure, which I hope will be debated by the House soon.

The shortest section of the right hon. Gentleman's exceptionally short speech was that devoted to the purposes of the Bill, and I understand why. Indeed, to be told that the Bill states the Government's positive attitude to industry is sufficient commentary on the lack of reasons contained in the speech of the Leader of the House.

It is no surprise to the Opposition that the Bill has nothing to do with the hallowed Tory objectives which normally accompany privatisation measures — the promotion of competition and efficiency. It has everything to do with the pressing requirements of this year's Budget. In short, the Bill is about rescuing the Chancellor of the Exchequer from making still more ferocious cuts in public expenditure or from increasing still further the weight of taxation on the economy.

In the autumn of this year the Government expect to raise between £6 billion and £8 billion from the sale of the British Gas Corporation—depending on the timing and the offered price. The sales of nationalised assets appear in the national accounts as negative public expenditure. The Government will thus be able to finance extra public expenditure—which they will not do—further to reduce the public sector borrowing requirement, to which they might wish to make a contribution or, best of all, to cut taxation and thus sweeten the increasingly sour electorate in the penultimate Budget of this Parliament.

Alas for the Chancellor of the Exchequer's political strategy, the collapse of North sea oil prices this year will

[Mr. Peter Shore]

result in a £5 billion drop in oil tax revenue. The greater part of the proceeds of the sale of the British Gas Corporation will be absorbed by making good the shortfall in North sea taxes. If that vast sum were not available, the Chancellor would have to contemplate either increasing taxation by up to 5p in the pound—a standard rate of 35p — or slashing public expenditure by another £5 billion.

The House should be aware of the magnitude of this sale. Government revenues, for some years, have been fortified by selling publicly owned assets. In the six years from 1979 to 1985, the Government raised £6,650 million by selling publicly owned industries. The sale of the British Gas Corporation will equal the total sum raised in the past six years. If previous sales can be described as selling the silver, then the sale of the British Gas Corporation is the rest of the contents of the house—the tapestries, the pictures, the furniture, the carpets, the chandeliers and a substantial mortgage on the house itself.

We have never had such a vivid demonstration of the subordination of long-term industrial policy to the short-term exigencies of financial and electoral pressures. It is no wonder that the Leader of the House hurriedly skated over this section of his speech and no wonder that he could not bring himself to admit that the Budget imperative and electoral calculations were the true reasons for the Bill.

The British Gas Corporation is one of the outstanding success stories of public ownership. It serves 16 million households and 35 million people. In the past 20 years it has switched its source of supply to the North sea and now provides a national piped gas supply from one end of the country to the other. It has captured the largest part of the rapidly growing domestic central heating market and it has a major share in the space heating market for industrial and commercial users. It is profitable and directly contributes to Government revenue from the taxation on its profits, through a negative external financing limit of £176 million and by the £500 million raised through the gas levy.

It is a nice paradox that the Government have made only three serious complaints against the industry in the past seven years. First, its showrooms were too successful, especially in the sale of gas appliances, in competition with other sellers. Secondly, its main product, gas, was too cheap and too competitive in relation to other energy suppliers. It had to be curbed by a Government imposed levy and raise its prices by 10 per cent. above inflation for three years running. Thirdly, it was too enterprising, having won for itself a substantial stake in North sea oil exploration and exploitation and having played a pioneering role in onshore oil development at Wytch farm. The British Gas Corporation has been forced to sell those profitable diversifications by Government decree. Therefore, there are no arguments on grounds of efficiency, enterprise, industrial relations, prices, profitability or productivity to be advanced in favour of the Bill. The Labour party is absolutely right to oppose it and to point out the muddle and damage that will follow the attempt to establish a giant private monopoly to take the place of the British Gas Corporation and then to attempt to regulate that monopoly for the benefit of consumers and the long-term national interest.

There are formidable problems involved. The transfer from public to private monopoly produces a radical change in the corporation's philosophy and in the dominant influences that will guide its future conduct. If the corporation's primary objective is no longer to serve the public interest, but instead to reward its shareholders, then we may ask: what are the implications for prices? What effect will it have on safety standards? How will short-term profit considerations be accommodated with long-term development needs? Who will decide depletion policy? What will be the strategy on imports and exports?

The Secretary of State for Energy would like to rid himself of his responsibilities, but he cannot. Thus, we have the complex new institutional set-up of the Director General of Gas Supply, Ofgas, the Gas Users' Council, the crucial guidelines on the licence — published a day before Second Reading — and the fallback of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

I am not surprised that my right hon. and hon. Friends have been wholly absorbed in Committee with the first part of part I. Within the timetable laid down in this guillotine motion, a further 52 or 53 clauses will fall to be considered, including the whole of the important and controversial part II, under which the corporation is turned into a public limited company and arrangements made for its disposal to private shareholders.

Among the matters that should be fully debated—not under the limitation of the guillotine — are the arrangements being made to sell great blocks of shares not to the public but to investors in New York, Germany and Japan. What limits will be placed on foreign ownership? Will there be a golden share for the Secretary of State? If so, in what areas of decision-making will he have override powers?

This is a totally unnecessary and destructive Bill. There are dangers in it for the consumer and for the national interest. It is merely adding insult to injury to deny the House and the country the advantage of a full and rigorous scrutiny of its provisions. We shall therefore vote against this guillotine.

4.47 pm

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I am pleased to be able to discuss the timetable motion, because it is an important measure which will ensure that the Bill gets through for the benefit of a variety of people, as my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal said.

It is important for consumers that the Bill goes through, so that we can privatise a resource of great value to the country. If we compare it with previous privatisations, we can say that employees will want to have their shares in this company so that they can participate in the company's equity.

In Committee we have spent a long time talking about many issues and have reached only clause 13 out of 66 clauses. The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) was kind enough to give us a dissertation on dog breeding.

Mr. Hardy: No.

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman intended to give a dissertation on dog breeding, but was called to order, which prevented us from enjoying his dissertation. We heard about the grubbing up of hedgerows, and we had an interesting lesson on the Inclosure Acts. I have enjoyed all of the hon. Gentleman's informative talks, but we must make progress.

Mr. Hardy: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the reference to the Inclosure Acts concerned the possibility

that private enterprise would have the power—without any consideration of the matter by the Government—to destroy boundary features which are required by law? I was seeking to ensure that the law was not brought into disrepute, and that was a perfectly logical and reasonable arrangement. I have certainly not tried to give a dissertation on dog breeding, though that would have been better than the Bill.

Dr. Clark: I concede that the hon. Gentleman referred to enclosures when we were talking about the compulsory purchase of land. We enjoyed his contribution, which delayed the Bill a little longer and contributed to the timetable motion. The Bill will be approved by the House in due course, and we should get it to the House rather than have it stuck in Committee night after night.

There are many clauses still to be discussed. I should like to discuss three important groups of clauses which will never be reached if we do not accept the timetable motion. They are all of great value to the consumer. We passed clauses 12 and 13, which deal with the calorific value of gas, rather quickly. We knew then that the timetable motion would be put before the House, and we were already speeding up in expectation of it.

We still have to discuss clauses 16 and 17, which refer to standards. They are vital to the consumer. Clause 16 relates to standard pressures of gas supply. Without these standard pressures, we could have pilot flames blowing out and dangers occurring in gas appliances. Consumers will be at risk if we do not have standard pressures.

We also need standards of purity, or gas may contain toxic chemicals and elements which when burnt could poison consumers. We also need, for fairness' sake, a standard calorific value. If gas is supplied below the expected calorific value the consumer pays more for his heat than he should, because gas is measured by volume rather than by calorific value. Clause 16 is vital to ensure that the consumer is protected by a set of standards and is buying a uniform product properly supplied.

Mr. Rowlands: The hon. Gentleman is talking about standard requirements, but the clauses are almost standard. They are substantially those included in the Gas Act 1972, which have been carried forward. They need less scrutiny because they are already substantially in place. He is making a bogus point.

Dr. Clark: I am grateful for that contribution. When we reach clauses 16 and 17 in two or three nights' time, I hope that they will go through extremely quickly, because they are standard clauses.

Clause 17 refers also to meter standards, to ensure that the consumers have meters that measure gas accurately, so that they pay for what they have received.

I come now to clause 18. In Committee, many hours were spent talking about the fact that we must have safety in the gas industry. Of course we must, but unless we reach clause 18 we shall miss an important safety aspect. The clause provides that part I of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 will be extended to include protection to the public from the dangers of transmitting gas through pipes —dangers from fire and explosion and the injuries that result. We must ensure that the clause receives fair and proper discussion.

I am sure that other hon. Members will wish to comment on other clauses, but I wish to deal with clauses 28, 29 and 30. They are important. They enable the Director General of Ofgas to investigate complaints and ensure that the Bill's provisions are properly administered. Clause 31 provides for how those complaints will be referred to the Director General and how the Gas Users Council will have an opportunity to pass complaints to him for his investigation.

Clause 36 is important. Consumers will be disappointed if delay in discussing the initial clauses means that we do not reach clause 36, which refers to the price that may be charged for reselling gas. This is of interest to tenants who are charged by their landlords for their gas. The clause ensures that those tenants, often elderly people or students in bedsitters, are not overcharged for the gas that their landlords supply.

In Committee we have had a number of discussions about the units by which gas is measured. We have talked about therms, BTUs, joules and gigajoules. Clause 47 tells us that a therm means 105·506 megajoules. The gigajoules about which we all liked talking must therefore be about 9·48 therms, as I worked out last night. We could use the round figure of 10 therms to a gigajoule. It may be of interest to hon. Members, in particular Opposition Members, to know something about where the word "joules" came from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is very interesting, but I do not see that it has much relevance to the motion.

Dr. Clark: I am concluding my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Joule was a physicist from Salford. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) would like to know that. He was instructed by a Professor Rowlands and I thought that the right hon. Gentleman might like to know that as well.

When Joule was experimenting to find a relationship between heat and energy, he realised that too much of the energy being put into the apparatus that he had devised was making sound. Energy was being dissipated as sound. If we are not careful, in Committee we shall also find too much energy being dissipated as sound.

4.57 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I do not suppose that any of us are surprised to be here, but the Government have brought in the guillotine motion with indecent haste. We have been told that we have reached the 14th clause out of 66. Despite what the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said, I do not think that anyone who reads our proceedings in Committee will find anything said that was not relevant or urgent.

As the Leader of the House said, the Bill is important. It is the biggest act of privatisation that has ever been witnessed and yet we expect it to go through the House from just before Christmas to the beginning of March, when a great deal of the justification for it has not been provided by the Government.

There has been no statement on whether there will be an allowance for the import and export of gas. That forms a major part of the Bill's background. It is unreasonable for the Government to say that we should get the Bill through the House of Commons before they have deigned to make a policy statement on gas trading. That is one reason why we should not be expected to rush through the remaining clauses.

Those of us who have opposed the Bill have been extremely worried at the way the Government have been

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

treating the opposition — whether constructive or deliberate. They have not tried to justify their case. They have told us constantly that we have merely to trust that when the Bill goes through and the mechanisms are created everything will be all right. We are not getting the information, and it seems to me that we are entitled to press this case harder than passing the motion would allow. In spite of what the Secretary of State said at Question time today, I suspect that the Government know there is very strong opposition, not just to the privatisation of the BGC, but to the way the Government are doing it. The privatisation does not meet any of the criteria that even the Conservative philosophy would expect. It does not create wider competition. It does not stimulate any new areas of competition. On the contrary, it creates a vast blue chip private monopoly, which is neither adequately regulated nor exposed fully to the competition which could be available.

The one benefit that I hope we may get once the guillotine falls is that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) will feel slightly less inclined to stay in his self-imposed silence and will force the pace on these issues, about which I know he feels strongly, and about which the Conservative Members have been strangely silent. The Government have failed to satisfy me and the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) about gas supplies to towns in Scotland which are remotely supplied by tankers rather than connected to the pipeline network. In spite of statements from the Minister that the Bill covers that, he was unable to demonstrate that the Bill is satisfactory in that regard. An amendment is still required to the licence to cover that.

The Bill is being forced through. It has no ideological justification. The Government have accepted precisely one amendment so far, which is to change the proposed Gas Users Council back to the Gas Consumers Council, which is what it was before the Government changed the name. That is the sum of what has been achieved.

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): Is the hon. Gentleman not forgetting the change to clause 4 which introduces a duty on the director general to promote competition in the industry? The hon. Gentleman was probably absent at the time.

Mr. Bruce: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will be able to explain the great changes that he feels have been made.

The Government have told us that the Bill meets the criteria which they maintain they want it to meet. When pressed, they simply tell us that the Bill covers it. They do not explain how it will work. We know that the Government expect opposition to this Bill in another place, and they are anxious to force it through with their majority here. They know that they will have some difficulty there, where amendments will be proposed to introduce elements of competition to try to break up the centralised monolithic BGC. I diverge from the Labour party on that. It is anxious to retain a centralised monopoly, even if private, presumably because Labour would renationalise it. The Labour party will not be able to renationalise the company, so it is important that the privatised BGC is subjected to the maximum competition and broken up as far as possible so that it is much more transparent and accountable.

The regulatory authority should have real powers to control the private monopoly in the country's best interests. Any amendment which would impose an effective regulatory body is ruled out of order by the money resolution. That is regrettable. The Government cannot say that because the regulatory body cannot be amended here, a future Government could not introduce stronger regulations. I hope that the prospectus for the BGC is published——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman recognises that what he is saying is outside the motion. I hope that he will address himself to it.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The fact remains that we are being forced to accept a Bill which has been pushed through with indecent haste. That means that we cannot consider many factors properly, such as the need for a stronger regulatory body. That can be put into the Bill in another place. I hope that that will happen, and that the Government do not subsequently use their majority here to overturn any decision that the other place makes.

The Government are not justified in guillotining the Bill in view of the speed with which they are introducing this major privatisation. Nor have they at any stage attempted to argue their case through. It is an example of the Government forcing a Bill through because they are desperate to get their sticky hands on the money to bail themselves out before inevitable defeat at the next general election.

5.5 pm

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): It often happens that different witnesses to a single event can give very different accounts of what occurred. Listening to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), I did not recognise what has happened in Committee. I recall that an amendment has been passed which the hon. Member apparently does not remember. He described the Government's response as inadequate. I think that we have had very full replies from my right hon. and hon. Friends, some of which we want to consider further. The hon. Gentleman referred to me as being silent, but I feel guilty for wearying the Committee too frequently. I did not recognise the hon. Gentleman's description.

I am very pleased to support this timetable motion. It was clear on Second Reading that this is a Bill which the House very much wants to pass. It is therefore reasonable for the Government to be allowed to go ahead with their privatisation programme, provided that sufficient consideration is given to the Bill.

The timetable motion proposes another 12 sittings, which seems to be adequate and appropriate for the task. The Bill has, from the outset, been of sufficient complexity and controversy for the need for a timetable motion always to be on the cards. That might lead some Members who have not been involved in the discussions to imagine that the Bill fitted into a stereotype — the Opposition filibuster, Government Back Benchers saying nothing very much and the Government making no concessions. The discussions on this Bill do not fit that stereotype, although some Opposition Members have strayed a little from time to time. At least it will be difficult for the House to understand how dog breeding, hedgerows and dissertations on sexism fit into the Bill.

Nevertheless, I pay tribute to Opposition Members for their fine speeches and contributions and for the high standard of research that has gone into them. There has been a great deal of unanimity in our wish to pursue topics such as the status of the consumer under the new arrangements. That has interested all hon. Members. The Committee has been helped considerably by the availability of the Energy Select Committee report, which was published early in our proceedings. That has put the Government in some difficulty, as they have had to respond ad hoc to certain of the Committee's recommendations before they were ready to reply to the report in detail, which, of course, they will do in due course.

There is another facet to the stereotype, which does not apply in this case. There have been many speeches from Conservative Members. Many of them have been directed at a common interest—how the customer will fare under the new arrangements when the BGC passes to the private sector.

It is not true that the Government have steadfastly refused to accept amendments. They have accepted two. They accepted one amendment from the Opposition. Although the Opposition do not appear to be very grateful to the Government for having accepted their amendment, it was substantial. I am only sorry that the right hon. and hon. Friends of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) seem now to deride her achievement. I thought that it was substantial.

The other amendment that was accepted by the Government stood in my name and in the names of several of my hon. Friends. It related to a new duty under clause 4. Again it was a very important amendment, which the Government accepted in a very generous spirit.

My right hon. and hon. Friends gave interesting explanations on a number of other proposed amendments that were withdrawn, voted down or not moved. A number of their replies have settled matters for me, but some of them have not gone so far as that. They have left me, and perhaps other members of the Standing Committee, with food for thought. I hope that the amendments have provided the Government with food for thought and that it will be possible to return to a number of them on Report. Some of the members of the Select Committee on Energy did not spend 85 hours in the Standing Committee, but they have a considerable interest in the Bill. I am sure that they will be anxious to make a contribution on Report and Third Reading.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that the Standing Committee spent a considerable time on clauses 4 and 7. It was appropriate to consider those clauses in great detail, but the debates were very wide-ranging and a number of general points were raised. They enabled virtually every point of principle to be debated to some extent. Therefore, we ought to have a slightly more disciplined discussion of later clauses because so many general points and points of principle have already been discussed.

A large number of important clauses have yet to be considered. My hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) gave his selection of clauses which he hopes will be discussed. Clauses 19 to 21, which govern the conditions for the competitive supply of gas by different gas producers to industrial consumers, are very important and the Committee will want to consider them. However, I accept that the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) may make the point that those clauses are borrowed from previous legislation. Clauses 31 to 40 contain very important provisions relating to the consumer which the Committee will want to study in detail.

The timetable motion will provide the Standing Committee with a suitable opportunity to discuss these important matters. However, there will be increased pressure upon all of us to confine our remarks to what is in the strictest sense relevant and to make them as terse and pithy as they can possibly be.

When I began my speech I said that I disagreed with the hon. Member for Gordon, but I agree with him about the difficulty of proceeding without knowing what the import-export regime will be. I made that point in Committee, but it arises with particular force as we think about the timetable motion.

It is difficult to judge the full effects of the Bill until there is a policy statement by the Government about the import and export of gas. We need to know what the market conditions will be at the point where the gas is produced: whether it will be sold to somebody who will supply the final customer or whether it will be sold directly to the final customer. We do not yet know whether there will be a free market for the import and export of gas, or whether an independent supplier will have the option of selling his gas to a body other than British Gas if he is not interested in providing gas directly to the customer. Until we know the answer to that question, it is difficult to judge whether the proposed regulatory regime is appropriate.

During the proceedings in Standing Committee I referred to this as a bit of a jigsaw. I said that some of the pieces are missing and that it is difficult to gauge what the final picture will be. I appreciate that it is by no means easy for the Government to decide what kind of regime is appropriate. These are complicated matters, and I know that the Government would like to be able to make an enduring statement. There is no point in making a statement that will soon have to be reviewed. I realise that it takes time for these matters to be settled. Nevertheless, this matter is of crucial importance.

I pay tribute to my right hon. and hon. Friends for their co-operation in providing us at an early stage with the draft authorisation for British Gas. I pay tribute to them also for the excellent briefing that they supplied to all the members of the Standing Committee. Therefore, I believe that the Government will want to settle as soon as possible this very important question about the import-export regime. All hon. Members will want to be able to have information about it before Report and Third Reading.

With that proviso, I am happy to support the timetable motion. If we are to be deprived of potentially 300 hours of further debate in Standing Committee, that is a deprivation up with which I shall be most happy to put.

5.17 pm

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) referred to another piece of the jigsaw falling into place. That has happened for me this evening. I notice that one member of the Government team is missing from the Treasury Bench, the hon. Member for Wirral, West (Mr. Hunt), the Under-Secretary of State for Energy. Throughout the Standing Committee proceedings I have persistently suggested that, because of his comparative innocence and naivety, he has not been included in the discussions about

[Mr. Michael Cocks]

the matters of a more shady character, such as timetable motions. I suspect that his absence from the Treasury Bench is probably because he has not been told about this debate. It will come as a surprise to him tomorrow when he finds the proceedings moving along a little more quickly than they have done so far.

It is most appropriate that I should speak in a debate on a guillotine motion. It is the first speech that I have made on the Floor of the House since I was guillotined by my constituency management committee. A majority of the management committee decided that I was no longer a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. I shall not dilate on that theme, or even mention the fact that the majority of those who thought that I was not a fit and proper person to be a Member of Parliament came into the constituency from another constituency after the redistribution of seats that took place before the last general election.

I have been a Government business manager and I therefore understand the need for Governments to move timetable motions from time to time. On one occasion my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and I had five timetable motions on the Thursday business statement. They were put through during the following week. You may recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the unfortunate circumstances that led to that build-up of pressure, but as soon as we had the results of the Thurrock and Rotherham by-elections we were able to proceed. This Government are under no such pressure. There was a need for timetable motions at that time. The five Bills that were under discussion on that occasion were most admirable measures. They were well thought out. It had taken a long time to polish and hone them. That does not apply to this Bill.

When the Leader of the House opened the debate, he referred to the report of the Select Committee on Procedure. Leaving aside our party political differences, I am full of goodwill towards the Leader of the House. However, it seemed to me that he was even more oblique than usual. A thick fog seemed to surround any effort to penetrate what he meant to say. On one occasion in the House he was quite flattered when I said he was like Prince K. S. Ranjisinhji in the way he gently dabbed the ball to off or glanced it to leg. In his reply the Leader of the House said he preferred to be likened to Jessup. I was too polite to point out that Jessup's nickname was "The Croucher". On this occasion the right hon. Gentleman crouched so low that he practically disappeared from sight. No doubt he will make himself plain in due course.

The Leader of the House spoke about measured considerations and quoted the right hon. Chuter Ede in the brief post-war Attlee Government. In Committee I have pressed on the Government the views of Lord Morrison of Lambeth about the gas nationalisation in that post-war period. Those views were endorsed during the passage of the 1972 Act by the right hon. Gentleman who is now the Secretary of State for Transport, so things have regressed since then. A timetable on this Bill is inappropriate, because as we unravel what I will politely call the Government's thinking behind the Bill, and as we try to tear away the successive veils and shrouds, it becomes quite clear that the Bill has not been thought out in the same way as the original nationalisation proposals were thought out.

When we ask the Government what estimates and extrapolations have been made by the Department, the answer that comes back, whether it is in 10 sentences or 10 paragraphs, boils down to "No." Beyond the doctrinaire decision to privatise this industry, there has been very little forward thinking about the effect it will have. Hon. Members will know that the nationalisation of the gas industry took place only after prolonged study, and the Heyworth report was the most substantial contribution to the thinking.

In Committee, we have not yet had any real information about the effects on safety, research and development, and the guarantees that will be given to people who are working in the industry. I hope that some information about those matters will be forthcoming when the Committee resumes.

I notice the appearance of the Under-Secretary, and I apologise for not giving him notice that I intended to mention him. It came as a complete surprise to me that he was absent from the Front Bench, and that was when the piece of the jigsaw mentioned by the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate fell into place. I happily apologise, but I did not realise until I noted his absence that my worst fears were to be confirmed.

The Government have not properly thought out the effects on all the people I have mentioned. There has also been an effect on Opposition Members in the Standing Committee. When we were having a debate the other night, my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) told the Committee that the showrooms in Padiham in his constituency had been closed. I asked him to give us more information, because it struck me that an unkind mind might interpret that punishing a Back-Bench Member of the Opposition for daring to raise something appertaining to his own constituency. My theory is burgeoning, because when I arrived in London this weekend I found a letter addressed to my wife. It was a disconnection notice from the North Thames gas board.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): Has the right hon. Gentleman paid the bill?

Mr. Cocks: The hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) has a suspicious mind. The bill had already been paid, as I was able to establish on the blower this morning. I was told to disregard the disconnection notice. But imagine the effect on a housewife of opening a thing like that.

Hon. Members may think that is not an entirely serious point, but if evidence continues to build up, then it will be drawn formally to the attention of the Leader of the House. Although the Leader of the House is not present, I hope he will study the remarks that are made in his absence. [HON. MEMBERS: Where is he?] Hon. Members are asking where he is. I have to say to them that the only person who works harder in the House than the Leader of the House is the Patronage Secretary. I hope that nothing disparaging will be said about the Leader of the House, because he has multifarious duties. I hope he will study the remarks that have been made and that the Government will think about them and be much more forthcoming.

I hope also that when we resume in Committee the Government will be much more forthcoming about how they see the future of this industry. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, this industry is one of the great success

stories. Through lack of foresight, the Government are in danger of spoiling it. I hope that at the end of this debate, when we get a reply from the Government, more information will be forthcoming about all the points raised time and again in Committee.

5.26 pm

Mr. John Watts (Slough): I hope that the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) will not find that British Gas plc will send him a disconnection notice for a bill that he has already paid.

As I listened to the speech of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), I was pleasantly surprised to find that it contained few of the ritual protestations about the death of free speech in this House. In my two and a half years in the House, speeches like that have seemed to be part of the ritual of the opposition to timetable motions. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman's speech was foreshadowed by the deafening silence that greeted the announcement of the timetable motion last Thursday.

This Standing Committee has been one of the most good natured that it has been my privilege to serve upon, and I join my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo), in paying tribute to the well-informed and interesting speeches from both sides on the Committee. I hesitate to suggest that the Opposition tactic was to filibuster. I was a member of the Standing Committee on the Finance Bill two years ago when it set a record of 150 hours, so perhaps I have a somewhat generous view of what constitutes filibustering.

I welcome the full consideration given in Standing Committee to certain clauses which have now, thankfully, been disposed of, not least those which refer to the duties of the Secretary of State and the proposed Director General, and the terms of the proposed licence to the British Gas Corporation.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), suggested there was indecent haste in coming forward with this timetable motion. I cannot agree with him, just as I cannot agree with his complaint that contributions from the Conservative side of the Committee were strangely absent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southgate commented on the remarkable fact that two witnesses to the same event can see different things. To be a witness to an event, one must be present at the event. Rather than contributions from our side of the Committee being strangely absent, the hon. Member for Gordon was markedly absent from our proceedings on a number of occasions. I have no doubt that his failure to recollect the important amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Southgate, with my support and that of my hon. Friends, and the generous and gracious way in which it was accepted by the Government can be accounted for by the fact that he was not present on that occasion.

Mr. Bruce: I certainly was.

Mr. Watts: If the hon. Gentleman was present, his lapse of memory is all the more regrettable.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) and I sought to make an important amendment to the Bill to impose a duty on the Director General to promote competition in the energy supply sector in general and not merely in the gas industry. I was disappointed that my proposals were greeted with derision by Labour Members, not least because the amendment was suggested to me by an important trade union in the energy supply sector. In view of the scathing criticism of my proposal, I concluded that no point would be served by pressing it to a vote, so I withdrew the amendment.

Those examples show that the allegation that there have been few contributions from Conservative Members does not bear examination.

I welcome the full consideration that the Committee has been giving to important clauses, but I feel that without the structure of a timetable there will be a tendency for the concern and commitment of hon. Members on both sides to lead them into being rather too thorough in their detailed consideration of the Bill.

The Committee has a clear duty to give the Bill close scrutiny, but it is important that it paces itself so that all the important parts of the Bill receive that scrutiny, and so that this important reform can be enacted at the earliest opportunity. It will bring many benefits to our national economy, to domestic and industrial gas consumers and to employees of the BGC, who will have an opportunity to participate in the ownership of this successful and important industry. There is a danger that the Committee could be so assiduous in the discharge of its duties that the reform will fall for lack of time. That would be a disaster. The timetable motion will ensure that the dual objectives of adequate consideration and the passage of the Bill in this Session are achieved.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney advanced the interesting notion that the timetable motion was connected with the Budget, which is due to be presented on 18 March. The motion requires us to report the Bill by 6 March, and it must have two more days for Report and Third Reading. After that, it has to go to another place. Even with the great skills of our business managers, it is unlikely that this important measure will be enacted before 18 March.

Of the clauses which we have not yet reached, and which we might take some time to reach without a timetable motion, I am particularly interested in the common carrier provisions in the clauses after clause 19. This aspect of the legislation first excited my interest in gas matters.

Energy has not always been foremost in my interests in the House or outside, but about 18 months ago one of the major industrial firms in my constituency told me that it was having difficulty in securing a gas supply from the BGC or any other supplier.

In my naivety, I said, "This is simple. The Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act gives you the right to purchase a supply from a gas producer and make use of the mains of the BGC to bring the supply to your premises. Why do you not make use of that Act?" I was told that the good intentions of existing legislation had become a dead letter because the British Gas Corporation refused to specify the terms on which it would make its pipeline network available to those seeking a private supply and because the BGC leaned on gas producers to dissuade them from entering into private supply contracts with industrial consumers.

I believe that the clauses after clause 19 will considerably strengthen provisions to stimulate competition in the supply of gas to industry. They represent a considerable advance on existing legislation. In Committee I shall seek to press Ministers for an assurance that my understanding of how the provisions will operate is correct and that the Bill opens up more competition in

[Mr. Watts]

the commercial supply of gas. If it were not for the timetable motion, the time that is necessary to consider that part of the Bill might not be available to us.

Although my experience in the House is relatively short, I believe that the workings of the House, and particularly of its Standing Committees, would be better accomplished if all Bills were timetabled before being sent to Committee. That is the only way to ensure adequate consideration of important clauses in important legislation, and it would also benefit the Opposition parties. Without the restraints of a timetable, they may feel under an obligation to spin out the time. I do not suggest that that has happened on this Bill, but there is a tendency for Opposition parties to feel that they have to take all the time at their disposal. Otherwise, some in the House or outside —perhaps their general management committees—may feel that they had not been doing their duty by opposing Bills as vigorously as they should. However, the adoption of such tactics may lead to disproportionate consideration being given to early clauses which may not be the most important parts of the legislation, with the result that too little time is left for the later clauses. Therefore, I firmly favour the principle of timetabling and the motion before us.

5.38 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I should start by responding to the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), who referred to speeches that I had made about the Inclosure Acts, piracy and one or two other matters. The hon. Gentleman ought to recall that those speeches were made after the Government decided to introduce the guillotine.

The hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) was the third of the 12 Conservative Back Benchers on the Standing Committee to speak in the debate, and it will be interesting to see where the other Conservative speakers come from. Nine of the Conservative Members on the Committee have not yet spoken, and the only one in the Chamber at present is the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), who is given to reading improving works of literature. We are told that the debates in Committee have been interesting and good-humoured, and one would imagine that they would have been in the Chamber to justify the Government's decision.

The hon. Member for Slough spoke in favour of a timetable, and there is a powerful argument in its favour. Many concede that it is sensible, although it means that the Opposition have sacrificed their only weapon—time. Even so, the Opposition should always consider whether to agree to a timetable if the Government of the day are putting forward a measure that is both in the national interest and is democratically sound, having been included in a mandate. It must also be approached in a spirit of responsibility.

In his thin speech, the Leader of the House justified the guillotine by saying that the policy was in the Tory party mandate. It was in the mandate, but one would have imagined that as the idea had been so much in the Government's mind, by now they would have made clear all their intentions and provided all the relevant information. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) said, many questions remain unanswered, despite the Government's long commitment to the measure.

As we are still not adequately informed about the Government's proposals, and as there is a high-handed and arrogant approach that denies us basic information, the Government cannot complain that the Bill has been subjected to searching scrutiny. We have an obligation to the House to operate with searching diligence. I regret only that that diligence has not yet been adequately rewarded and recognised by the provision of vital items of information, a list of which I shall not repeat because my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney spelt them out. We need to know the Government's intentions. We need the relevant estimates, and we need to know by how much the Treasury will benefit from this act of piracy—I make no apology for repeating the reference that I first made in Committee last Thursday.

The Minister should understand that we are concerned about the people who work in British Gas. It is true that from time to time quiet murmurs of appreciation have emanated from the Government Benches, but some profound anxieties remain in the industry. For example, the Minister made it clear that one third of gas supplies produced by British Gas are vulnerable to change. If British Gas were to lose anything like that proportion of its provision to the private sector, the implications for those who work in the gas industry would be substantial. We are right to reflect their anxieties, because, as the Minister has recognised, British Gas is probably the most successful large commercial undertaking in these islands. It is successful because of the efforts of those who work in the industry. They deserve rather better than to be subject to the greed being displayed by the Government, although it is being displayed in less than offensive tones.

I referred in Committee to an anxiety expressed by a constituent, an employee of the National Bus Company, who had given excellent service but who was left in uncertainty about his superannuation. I am afraid that the good services of employees in the gas industry could be treated in the same way. The most important aspects of our consideration must reflect the national interest. Over the past 10 years British Gas has had an operating profit of £11,791 million. That is a substantial sum and we need to know whether the Government's proceeds from the sale of British Gas will be anything like the yield that British Gas has provided to the Treasury over the past 10 years.

It would be remarkably stupid if the Government were to accept, as the proceeds from a sale, a sum that was less than could be yielded from the industry's annual harvest. That would show a fecklessness which no other Parliament would have tolerated. Before we decide to go blissfully ahead and co-operate with the Government in a measure such as this, we are entitled to ask whether it is in the national economic interest. Our suspicions do not give rise to any reassurance on that point.

There are two other aspects of this matter. In Committee there have been murmurings from Tory Back Benchers and from Ministers about the need to promote competition. I can understand people wanting some competition. I can understand the entrepreneur wanting a share of the gas market in the densely populated areas, where there is high gas consumption. I wonder how many Conservative Members would regard with respect an entrepreneur who wished to supply gas to Caithness and Sutherland, or to other less populated areas of Britain which Conservative Members represent and claim to be

proud to serve. I am not sure that the competition argument will ever be as tenable as Conservative Members like to suggest.

Another aspect of the matter should give rise to serious concern, and the Minister has not satisfied us on that point yet. British Gas has a tremendously successful record in research and development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member has been saying but he has not been addressing himself carefully to the motion. I hope that he will consider the extent to which his remarks are relevant.

Mr. Hardy: I should have thought that my remarks were as relevant as, if not more relevant than, some of my speeches in Committee have been.

The House should not confer the power that a timetable motion provides and allow the Government to take dictatorial action that might threaten the research and development record of British Gas. There is a serious threat, because some of the profits from British Gas that have financed its superb record of research and development will be imperilled. We shall see yet another sector of British industry on the slippery slope to decline; a decline which has been very marked, and our progress down which has been accelerated in the past five years.

The House should always consider a timetable motion, but should do so recognising that the Government should never ask for a timetable motion until all the questions relevant to the Bill have been answered in Committee. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney said, questions have remained unanswered, and until answers are given, and there can be an assurance that the national interest is not being betrayed, the Opposition are entitled to maintain their steady determination. Perhaps we should retain some obduracy before allowing the Government to exercise their will.

The Government have an enormous majority, which has allowed them to operate in an atmosphere of arrogance. That is demonstrated by the absence from this debate of the majority of Tory Members who serve on the Committee. No doubt they will cheer when the timetable motion is approved, but I hope that in the period remaining we shall have at least sufficient time to discuss the rest of the Bill. That would be helped by the pithy contributions asked for by the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo). If there are such pithy speeches from Conservative Members, I hope that none of them will speak at such a length that they will prevent proper consideration in Committee of the important clauses.

I do not know whether the Government will find it offensive if I say that they have exercised an arrogant and insensitive power, but that is the impression which I hope the country will feel has been created.

5.50 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): On Second Reading hon. Members referred to the indecent haste with which the Government have forced us to consider the Bill. We have had no chance to digest the contents of the licence. The Government continued that indecent haste in Committee. We were honoured in Committee by the presence of the Secretary of State. I regret that he is not here now. The right hon. Gentleman has been talking to his right hon. and hon. Friends. Perhaps he is trying to convince them of the Bill's value. Perhaps he is trying to convince them about something else. Perhaps the leadership is at stake.

The Standing Committee disregarded the Select Committee's work. The Select Committee spent time examining conditions in the industry in an attempt to guide the Standing Committee. There is no evidence that the Standing Committee considered the Select Committee's findings. I regret that some hon. Members who made recommendations in Select Committee failed to support them in the Standing Committee. That must have been embarrassing for them. The time spent by the Select Committee assisting the Standing Committee has been ignored. That brings the Select Committee system into disrepute. The Minister shakes his head. I hope that he will tell us later that he accepts our amendments, which are based upon the Select Committee's recommendations.

Dr. Michael Clark: In Committee, when similar comments were made by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse), I said that note had been taken of the Select Committee's recommendations by Government Members and had been listened to carefully by Ministers. I said that proposals in the Bill acknowledged the Select Committee's recommendations, although not in the precise way suggested by the Select Committee.

Mr. Lofthouse: The hon. Member is saying that words were used to get round the Select Committee's recommendations. That is what I said in Committee and he knows it to be right.

More time must be allowed for us to debate the Bill. The Bill proposes selling the nation's assets. It is an attempt by Government to increase the Treasury's wealth for a short-term political gain. Few people fail to see that. This is the economy of the pawnshop. The Government say that they must fulfil their manifesto commitment before the next election. But where will they get the money?

The Bill permits the largest denationalisation exercise ever witnessed. We are talking about £6 billion or £8 billion of income for the Treasury and about limiting the number of hours in which the Committee can digest the Bill.

Many members of the Standing Committee are not present today. But all Labour members of the Committee have been here because they are gravely concerned that the Committee has not been given sufficient time to consider fully major legislation.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that the Tory Whips are touring the Corridors trying to drag in their hon. Friends? I understand that they have been able to drag in four of their hon. Friends, including the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). I overheard an hon. Lady tell a Tory Whip to something off. That shows the interest that Tory Members have in the Bill.

Mr. Lofthouse: I agree that it shows the disregard which Government Members have for the Bill.

We need more time because many Government Members have not had time to read the Bill or the Select Committee report. I challenged them about that in Committee. Obviously the Secretary of State has not had time to read the Bill. That is why we need more time.

[Mr. Lofthouse]

During questions to the Secretary of State for Industry I expressed concern about rights of entry and I was told that the only right of entry was for safety purposes.

Clause 16 is headed

"Entry for replacing, repairing or altering pipes"

and states:

"Any officer authorised by a public gas supplier, after seven clear days' notice to the occupier of any premises, or to the owner or lessee of any premises which are unoccupied, may at all reasonable times, on production of some duly authenticated document showing his authority, enter the premises for the purpose of—

(a) placing a new pipe in the place of any existing pipe which has already been lawfully placed; or

(b) repairing or altering any such existing pipe."

Clause 14 says that the officer may enter for the purpose of

"*(a)* inspecting the meters, fittings and works for the supply of gas;

(b) ascertaining the quantity of gas supplied;

(c) performing the duty imposed on the supplier by paragraph 1 or 2 above;

(d) exercising the power conferred on the supplier by paragraph 4(3) or 8(7) above; or

(e) in the case of premises where the supplier has reason to believe that a compressor or compressed air or extraneous gas is being used, inspecting the premises and ascertaining whether the provisions of paragraph 8 above are being complied with."

At least there have been certain protections while gas has been a nationalised industry—for example, avenues to Parliament and to the Gas Consumers Council. Is anyone in the House confident that the private sector will give careful consideration to, and not abuse its rights of entry into people's homes? I raised that point in Committee, but received no response.

The Committee took a responsible attitude and very little time has been wasted. Reference has been made to the dog stories of my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), but outside of that, little time was wasted. The timetable does not allow sufficient time to complete the Bill.

We all know what this motion is about—it is about grabbing and privatising everything possible during the few short months left to the Government so that they can assist their friends who, in return, will assist them with a contribution to the Tory party.

6.1 pm

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): I agree with all that my right hon. and hon. Friends have said about the Government's motives. It is regrettable that they have brought forward a timetable motion on an issue of such significance. There is no doubt that it is based on the dogma and doctrinaire attitude of the Government. The Opposition are well aware that privatisation is nothing more than a rip-off of national assets.

We must put this legislation into the correct context so that people can understand the importance of what is happening. The gas industry has an annual turnover of £7,000 million, it has more than 16 million customers, more than 112,000 employees and superannuated pensioners, net assets of more than £16 million, and makes a profit of £930 million in one year. That is the scale of the industry, and therefore the scale of the rip-off.

The Opposition have nationalised unprofitable industries—those that have been clapped out by private enterprise and turned into loss-making organisations. There are few industries that we have nationalised through dogma—it has been in the national interest or because they have been clapped out by public enterprise.

However, the Conservative Government denationalises only profitable industries so that they can line the pockets of their friends in the City. I accept that they are not hypocritical about that. Perhaps we should learn a few lessons — they have been in power for centuries and learnt how to rip off the country. They desperately wanted to get back into power in 1979 so that they could carry on with the rip-off.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North) *rose*——

Mr. Rogers: If the hon. Gentleman wants to speak, he must try to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speake. Many Opposition Members are waiting patiently to participate in the debate.

The Government have tabled this motion because time is tight for them, and they want to make their pay-offs quickly. They are rushing through the legislation so that their friends in the City and the capitalists in this country —and, indeed, in many overseas—can make a killing from this industry as they have from others.

The hon. Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) suggested that it was a good-natured Committee. I agree, although last Thursday was an exception. Hon. Members have enjoyed participating in the debates. However, the Government's responses to many of the issues raised have been wholly unsatisfactory, other than on the technical and legalistic points relating to the interpretation of the Bill. They have not compromised or accepted any reasonable amendment.

The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) said that my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) had managed to put through one amendment. That amendment simply changed the proposed title of Gas Users Council to Gas Consumers Council. As she said, who would want a body whose initials were GUC? That is about the measure of the Government's legislation.

The Government's responses have been poor and have disappointed the Committee. The civil servants provided excellent notes on clauses—which, indeed, were rather better than the Bill itself. Yet even with their help, we have had only doctrinaire answers. The Government continually say, "We are trying to increase competition." That is not the case — they are simply turning a profitable public monopoly into a profitable private monopoly to line the pockets of their friends rather than benefit the taxpayers.

The issues that we have already discussed in Committee have been complicated and range from the responsibilities of the new directorate and regulatory body to compulsory purchase—not only for access to pipelines but for land purchase to build pumping stations and ancillary works —the regulatory issues, the price formula and so on. The hon. Member for Southgate was right to say that many of those matters are nonsense until the Government adopt a proper import-export policy. The Committee also considered service to customers—some 27,000 people a year refer their complaints to the Gas Consumers Council and hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people have service problems each year. We also discussed standing charges, disconnection, aspects of safety, resource development from the North sea, future investment and obligations to supply.

All those technical points on the transfer of massive public assets into private pockets pale into insignificance compared with the fact that more than 100,000 people are being transferred. The hypocrisy of the Government has been shown — when it suited them on the Westland affair, their cry was, "That is what the workers want." Never at any stage in this massive transfer of public assets have the Government consulted the workers in the gas industry. They do not have the guts or the gumption to do that. The Government's hypocritical stance has manifested itself completely in the Bill.

There is no security in this transfer for the workers who have given a lifetime to the industry. As was said earlier, the industry is composed of not just structures, equipment, land or showrooms; people are involved. When the Bill has gone through Parliament, especially the other place, I hope that we shall have been able to secure some sort of future for those people beyond vesting day. I have no confidence that a private monopoly will look upon its staff and give them the facilities in the way that British Gas does.

I am fed up with the Government saying how well British Gas is doing. If British Gas is doing so well, why do not the Government leave it alone? Throughout the Committee stage we have attempted to find the answers to those problems. We have not done so, and after the motion is approved by the House today we shall have to crash through the remaining clauses — clauses of enormous importance. No Conservative Member can accuse us of not tackling the Bill in a responsible manner, apart from some vague criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) after the guillotine motion was mentioned in Committee. We have searched and probed, trying to discover what the position will be.

Labour Members have acted responsibly. This massive transfer of public assets on a scale never before seen in Britain will require the most searching examination and that is why we deplore this timetable motion.

6.11 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers), who always makes eloquent and interesting contributions to our debates, although we do not always agree. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) made some dreadful suggestion about the Whips dragging me in, but I came entirely of my own volition. This important matter needs proper debate. If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene and apologise, I am happy for him to do so.

Mr. Robert C. Brown: I do not wish to apologise. I simply want to ask the hon. Gentleman if he would care to wait for a moment while I go to the Library and get a Bible for him to swear on.

Mr. Marlow: If the hon. Gentleman wants to get a Bible, I shall be quite happy to swear on it.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Whips have never forced him to do anything?

Mr. Marlow: There is quite a lot of truth in what my hon. Friend says.

The Government have been accused of arrogance. The Opposition always accuse the Government of arrogance when we debate a timetable motion. The world record for the largest number of guillotine motions in any one Session or any one day belongs to the Labour party. It does not improve our deliberations on such issues if we accuse each other of arrogance.

I have spent quite a lot of time on various Committees. At the moment I am a member of the Committee which is examining the Housing and Planning Bill, on which there seems to be a certain amount of common ground, and we are having a great deal of sensible discussion. Previously I have been on Committees, such as that which discussed the Telecommunications Bill when we had hours of sterile discussion because the Opposition had been told by their paymasters, as they probably have in this case, that they must defeat, delay and hammer the Bill at all costs. I am not being critical, because that is true of Oppositions of whatever party.

The time seems to be coming when we shall have a more sensible way of dealing with such issues. Although I am not an expert on the Bill, I am pleased to see that the timetable motion—I call it that rather than a guillotine —is taking place after only 85 hours of debate and that procedures are being set out whereby time can be allocated sensibly for the future discussion of the Bill.

I am enthusiastic to get the Bill on the statute book because the whole country is enthusiastic to get the Bill on the statute book. If it is to be on the statute book, it must be properly debated, and I am sure that in the time remaining, in the procedures outlined by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, it will be properly debated.

I remember canvassing during the general election and every so often we would see a yellow van which belonged to British Telecom. Our manifesto committed us to privatising—or putting into proper public ownership— BT. There was some controversy about that, and, understandably, many workers in BT were worried. I can remember my helper, as helpers sometimes do, saying, "Look, there is one of those yellow vans. Let's move on quickly because we do not want to get bogged down." We did not do that. We stopped and discussed the matter. We answered queries and debated the issue with people from BT. But there is no doubt that at the time they were worried about the forthcoming privatisation.

The hon. Member for Rhondda said that we had not consulted the workers. Has he consulted the workers in BT since that company's privatisation? If he did, I think that he would find overwhelming support for the measure and overwhelming enthusiasm among the workers in that industry for what the Government have done. That is why, following the success of the privatisation of BT, we should move as rapidly, efficiently and effectively as we decently can to put this new and exciting measure on the statute book.

Dr. Michael Clark: The hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said that there was no security in a privatised company, but does not the fact that 95 per cent. of BT employees have purchased shares in their company show that they feel that it is entirely secure, and is not exactly the same likely to happen with British Gas?

Mr. Marlow: It is generally agreed that the privatisation of BT was an overwhelming success. It is increasingly being seen as an overwhelming success for the taxpayer, the consumer and the work force. Workers were effectively encouraged to buy shares in their industry, and we are now reaping the benefits of that.

[Mr. Marlow]

During the election campaign BT was an issue. Subsequently, I had quite a lot of correspondence from workers in BT before privatisation. They were worried about what would happen. They felt uncertain about the future. Since privatisation there has been nothing but enthusiasm—nothing but a success story.

I am not inviting them, but I have not yet had one letter from anybody in the gas industry complaining or worrying about the Bill. They are only too happy to follow the example of BT. They are only too enthusiastic to get the measure under way so that they can share in the success that they have seen their friends and brothers in BT share.

The Bill has been described as an act of piracy, and the hon. Member for Rhondda asked why the Government privatise only profitable companies, not loss-makers. It would be extremely difficult to go to the market with something that has made a loss and to ask somebody to buy it. People might ask for some money to take it away. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) rightly said that if the price is low enough there will always be a buyer. But if one has the chance, it is far better to move a company into profit so that a better price can be obtained.

The hon. Member for Rhondda also said that the Government want to proceed with the Bill only because they want to line the pockets of their friends. No doubt, he is an avid reader of newspapers. He will have read in several newspapers today that National Freight Corporation workers who bought shares in their own business now find that their shares are worth 22 times more than when they bought them. If any people are lining their pockets, it is those who work in the businesses and industries, and that is how it should be.

I hope that British Gas workers, like British Telecom workers, will buy their full quota of shares when the issue comes on to the market, because that will do them nothing but good. If they make a gain, as I believe they will, I am sure that all Conservative Members—I cannot speak for the Opposition—will be happy.

Mr. Lofthouse: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that a short time ago the Prime Minister advised me not to believe everything I read in newspapers?

Mr. Marlow: I think that we can take that intervention as it comes and pass on without bothering to refer to it.

Privatisation is one of the Government's great themes. It has been one of the great successes of this Parliament. We have had success with British Telecom. We are sbout to have success with British Gas. It is clear that the industries in the nationalised sector which have been privatised and given to the people have produced better results for the consumer, the taxpayer and, above all, for the people who work in them. I hope that, if we get this measure under way quickly and effectively, the lessons we have learnt from the nationalised industries will be applicable to the nationalised services, whether it be housing, schools or hospitals. That is why I wish this measure godspeed.

6.21 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I am not sure that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has raised the tone of our proceedings, but he has been wrong in two respects about British Telecom. He said that the workers welcomed privatisation; but there have been redundancies in Dundee, where there is more than 17 per cent. unemployment, and British Telecom has not shown the slightest consideration. I am not sure whether that was caring capitalism. Domestic charges for telephone calls are some of the highest in Europe. I suspect that, in years to come, the constituents of the hon. Member for Northampton, North and many others will regret having to pay an excessive amount for gas compared with current charges.

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): As a matter of interest, will the hon. Gentleman confirm whether his party is in favour of renationalising British Telecom?

Mr. Wilson: We would certainly be in favour of British Telecom being in the public sector. It is daft to have a telecommunications system in the private sector. If the right hon. Gentleman thought that he would cause me embarrassment on that score, let me disabuse him. The main problem in taking British Telecom back into public ownership is, in a sense, financing it. I have no doubt that BT's domestic consumers would be better looked after than they are by the privatised company.

I have nothing against timetable motions per se. I suspect that hon. Members would say that they warmly favour the use of a timetable motion. When hon. Members move from Opposition to Government, they usually cast aside their arguments and deploy timetable motions. The timetable motion is good in principle, but because of the inertia that governs this place, we do not have adequate timetabling arrangements. We shall have to wait for the report by the Select Committee on Procedure.

The time taken to debate this legislation has not been excessive. This important measure should be given greater consideration. I do not think, even though I have suffered with other Committee members, that the consideration should be shortened by so much. Questions should be asked about the Standing Committee system rather than about timetabling. It is ludicrous that we can spend up to 150 hours in Standing Committee when more than half of the Committee's members, because of the Government's inbuilt majority, are constrained to be silent and not allowed to participate, with the honourable exception of the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo).

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Gentleman's statement is not correct. I am not the honourable exception. A fairly large number of Conservative Members have contributed to the debate.

Mr. Wilson: The hon. Gentleman should read the Committee's proceedings. The scales are not tipped too heavily by the contributions of Conservative Back Benchers. The hon. Gentleman might wish to say that the quality of the contributions has been high, but that would suggest that he was moving from his usual standards of humility, and I am sure that he would not wish to do that.

Conservative Members have contributed to the Committee's debates. The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate was probably at his most efficient in that he tabled amendments and spoke to them. However, when it came to the vote, he back-tracked as fast as he could. My hon. Friend the Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and I spoke in favour of an amendment that the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate had tabled and commended to us,

but, when the hon. Gentleman sought leave of the Committee to withdraw it, we had to force it to the vote. We had the strange circumstance of the Labour Opposition, with members of the Liberal and Scottish National parties, voting in favour of competition and the Government voting against. At least the hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate had the decency to abstain from the vote on his amendment.

If we are to change our timetabling procedures, we should look at Standing Committees. This morning, I glanced at a copy of the "Commonwealth Parliamentarian", a rather weighty magazine, which said that the Canadian Government are taking steps to relax the Whips' powers—no doubt that sent a shudder through the Government and Opposition—and that Government Members would be expected to increase their participation in debates. Because of the origins of the Canadian Parliament, Canadian procedures are akin to ours.

We have not had sufficient time to consider the Gas Bill. I shall vote against the guillotine motion. It is a matter of mobilising the big battalions. The Government have the right to shorten the debate, but the Bill is bad because it will lead to higher gas prices. It will be deeply damaging because it takes powers from the regional areas and gives them to London. We have not tackled the significant energy issues relating to gas supplies in the 1990s. The issues have not been resolved to my satisfaction. We have not dealt with import-export problems. I suspect that a statement will be made on that subject as soon as the Gas Bill is on its way to the other place.

6.27 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): The privatisation of British Gas is an important issue to the people. The hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said—he has now left the Chamber—that privatisation has been a success, but he failed to say for whom it has been a success. It certainly has not been a success for the nation as a whole. The hon. Gentleman failed also to say what will happen to the Government once they have no more assets to privatise and are faced with loss of income in each successive year.

Privatisation of British Gas, once the legislation is forced through, will mean that the nation will probably get only about half the corporation's value in real terms as income—£6 billion or £7 billion, which is only half what it is worth. The nation will lose also more than £1 billion year after year in profits which could have been used to its benefit.

The Opposition have tried to move constructive amendments in Committee. We have not attempted to delay proceedings. On many occasions, Ministers have to some extent agreed with our comments. I have asked them why, if they believe that British Gas is so successful, they need to privatise it. They have said that they need to remove the shackles of public ownership from British Gas. I have repeated, and I am sure my hon. Friends agree, that if they had proposed a Bill which removed shackles and gave the sort of freedom that should bear on that public asset I would be prepared to support it.

We have sought at all stages to move amendments that would protect this important national energy supply. It is an issue that we could debate for many hours and it is right that there should be sufficient time to debate it in Committee. We believe that the Government are failing to recognise the importance of gas for our essential overall energy requirements and the need to have a national energy policy. Gas should be publicly owned.

We have tried to protect the consumer. Time after time the Government have said that they wish to seek the protection of the consumer, but they have failed to accept a single amendment which would write such protection into the Bill. If they really believe that consumers are entitled to that protection they should be prepared to move in that direction. Of course, they are issues which we have to debate again, but the Government are now to curtail the time that is available. I believe that the protection of the consumer is an important aspect and that the Government should be moving in that direction. They are prepared to believe that market considerations will make privately owned British Gas take the consumer into account, but I would prefer to see them protected by legislation if the industry has to go into the private sector.

Another important aspect we have tried to protect is the interests of the staff and employees of British Gas. The Government express sympathy for them, but they are not prepared to accept a single amendment that would protect the rights of the employees in the industry. We recognise that the consultation procedure in British Gas at present is excellent and we have tried to move amendments that will build on that basis and improve employee participation in the industry. Surely, if they believe that employees should have shares at a discount and preference price—which I would not disagree with if the industry has to be privatised—why do they not also enable an employee of British Gas to be on the board of directors? It has to be said that the percentage of shares that will be owned by employees, even if every single employee bought a share, would be a small proportion.

We have also tried to move amendments for important protection for safety and again they keep referring to the Health and Safety Executive. I accept that it will be covered by the Health and Safety Executive, but once this vital and important industry is in the private sector we would like to see it have several of those important issues protected by legislation.

In Committee I referred briefly to the closure of showrooms. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) also referred to it. I said that I feared that privatisation would lead to closure and we moved an amendment to protect them. I have since received a letter dated 11 February 1986, to which I referred in the last Committee sitting, from Mr. B. Thompson, regional secretary of British Gas North Western which informs me that the Padiham showroom in my constituency is to be closed on 18 July 1986. We will obviously debate the issue further in Committee, but I believe that that showroom is being closed in preparation for privatisation. When privatisation takes place profit will be more important that service and the national interest will also be of second rate importance. We believe that the amendments we have debated in Committee have been constructive in the interests of the nation and the consumers.

6.34 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As hon. Members will know, with great reluctance I left the Committee considering the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill to devote more time to the Gas Bill, because I believed that it was in the interests of my constituents to spend as much time as possible debating the privatisation of this important

[Mrs. Ann Clwyd]

industry. Had I, or my constituents, realised that the debate would be curtailed, I would have reconsidered my decision, and perhaps the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill would have had the benefit of some Labour Members on the Committee. However, it is no use crying over spilt milk.

I merely want to reinforce what my hon. Friends have said during the debate. It is disgraceful that such an important debate should be curtailed in this way, particularly as there are many aspects which we have had to skim over because of the constraints of time during the past few weeks. It is appalling that such an important issue should be curtailed in this way.

Had I realised that Conservative Members were suffering from a lack of stamina, I might have had more sympathy for their point of view. It was evident during the only all-night session that they were flagging. They had to organise teams to go backwards and forwards for rest, and some hon. Members were observed sleeping in sleeping bags in the Corridor. It was obvious that they were not up to the task that they had set themselves. It is with considerable sympathy that I accept that argument.

The Minister of State was not able to go to Norway for an important meeting of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries Ministers because of that all-night session, and again I sympathise with him on that. I am not encouraging all-night sessions, but there must be an opportunity to discuss issues of great importance when we are disposing of a national asset in this way. We should have proper debates on such issues, and I think that the Opposition have made that clear.

My hon. Friends have mentioned safety. I do not believe that we have had adequate answers from the Government on this issue. I accept that as the Bill runs its course, and as we move to other clauses, we will have some opportunity to discuss the matter, but there has been inadequate discussion of the earlier clauses dealing with health and safety.

My colleagues and I have expressed our anxiety about the additional strains that will be placed on the Health and Safety Executive after privatisation. Since 1979 its staff has decreased by 13 per cent., and that of the inspectorate by 15 per cent. As a result, visits to factories by the health and safety inspectors are down by almost 15 per cent.

The Government have said in Committee that the Health and Safety Executive has an important role to play in the future of the privatised gas industry. The Minister of State said that we were right to emphasise safety, but in answer to me he said:

"she cannot be allowed to get away with broad allegations about the resources of the Health and Safety Executive. Such scare stories are not true".—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 11 February 1986; c. 704.]

I believe that if we had more time to go into the rights and wrongs of the arrangements being made for health and safety it would be shown quite clearly that the protection that is being offered will not be sufficient.

I shall just touch on the existing regulations—the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1972, and the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984. Until 1985 gas safety standards were the responsibility of the Department of Energy, which employed eight inspectors in its gas standards branch. Those eight inspectors were transferred to the Health and Safety Executive in 1985, immediately prior to the Health and Safety Executive assuming responsibility for the enforcement of both sets of regulations. Because of the lack of resources, the Chief Inspector of Factories has issued instructions to factory inspectors to enforce the gas safety regulations on a purely reactive basis rather than on a pre-emptive basis.

The effect of the inspector shortages can be seen from a comparison of the prosecution figures. This is tremendously important, because people are concerned about safety. Department of Energy prosecutions were 30 in 1981, 33 in 1982 and 23 in 1983. In 1984 there were only two prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive. The Chief Inspector of Factories has issued guidance to the factory inspectors about prosecution policy on gas safety. Although not explicitly urging a low profile on prosecutions, the chief inspector's instructions have to be maintained to minimise the potentially heavy burden on the Health and Safety Executive's resources.

We briefly touched on this matter in our initial debates. Part of the difficulty faced by the Health and Safety Executive in mounting effective enforcement practices lies in the difficulty of discovering evidence. When the Department of Energy has responsibility, there were close working relationships with the gas board, and the Department of Employment relied heavily on British Gas's detailed, factual, expert evidence. Since the new Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985, British Gas's reports on incidents and dangerous occurrences have not identified the installer. All this has led to increasing the Health and Safety Executive's difficulties in mounting prosecutions.

Because of the additional burdens being put on the Health and Safety Executive by the Bill, we should remember that there are only 520 factory inspectors operating in the field. That is only a couple of dozen more inspectors than in 1974, before the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act added 8 million extra workers and hundreds of thousands of extra premises to the scope of protective legislation. The factory inspectorate is now 35 per cent. below the recommended staffing levels accepted by the Government in 1979.

As the Bill advocates a system of authorisation involving the Health and Safety Executive, it is relevant to note that when the licensing of asbestos contractors was introduced by the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations, lack of resources meant that the executive was unable to vet any applicant. Licences under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations are issued without any checks on the contractor by the Health and Safety Executive. It does not have the staff to administer a different licensing system.

That is one of the important reasons why the Government should not be allowed to apply this limitation on discussions that involve such important aspects for the public as safety in the gas industry.

6.42 pm

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I declare a dual interest in that I am a member of the General, Municipal, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, which organises the employees of British Gas, and I also worked for 30 years in the private and publicly owned British gas industry before I entered the House. Therefore, I am seriously concerned that this important Bill will not have the discussion that I feel it merits.

I know that the Secretary of State will say, "But the Bill has already had 87 hours in Committee and we normally bring forward a guillotine motion after about 80 hours." This is an extremely important Bill. In fact, I go so far as to say that I doubt very much whether there has ever been a more important Bill before the House of Commons than this Bill. For that reason, if for no other, it needed far more than 87 hours in Committee before the guillotine was brought in.

I am shocked that, after 87 hours, tomorrow morning the Committee will already be discussing clause 14. That is one quarter of the way through the Bill. The major part of the Bill would be dealt with well if it were left in Committee for another 30 or 40 hours. That would not be an unreasonable thing for the Government to do. I am inclined to say: once a Chief Whip, always a Chief Whip. The former Labour Chief Whip took charge of the Bill last week when my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Mr. Cunliffe), the Committee Whip, was away on unavoidable duties outside the House. I understand that when my right hon. Friend the former Chief Whip was there, more progress was made in one sitting than in 10 or more when my hon. Friend the Member for Leigh was there. Former Chief Whips cannot help themselves.

To be more serious, I am concerned about the important parts of the Bill that will be unamended. We received blank assurances from the Government that everything will be lovely, and that the private shareholders will look after the industry, together with this guy, the Director General of Gas Supply. I ask the Treasury Bench: how will the shareholders look after the public interest? The only interest that the private shareholder will have in the industry, once it is privatised, will be in private profit. We cannot be as optimistic as the Secretary of State and his colleagues.

There is nothing specific in the Bill on health and safety, although there are many general assertions. The Government seem to resist attempts to tighten health and safety in the general sense. The latter parts of the Bill dealing specifically with safety will come under the guillotine, so that the rights of the workers in the industry —present and future—will be ignored in so far as they will not be debated. There will not be time to do so under the guillotine motion.

There is nothing specific about the rights of the consumer, although I understand that a cosmetic change has been introduced by an amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). The latter parts of the Bill deal with the consumer and, again, that matter will not be discussed because of the guillotine.

All the financial aspects of the Bill are in part II, and, again, debate on them will be chopped. Why? What have the Government got to hide? Is it right that a £16 billion asset—an asset in which every household has an £800 stake — should be bartered away in some hurried whispers? Not only is the gas industry affected. Tens of thousands of other jobs in the support industries will be affected. I could not hazard a guess at how many countless thousands of jobs will be affected by the measure. There is nothing in the Bill about the future of people not directly employed by the gas industry.

The Government are crawling around dismantling British industry and they want to gag those who are alerting the public to the Government's activities. The British Gas Corporation is guilty of that, because it has told its workers—and this is scandalous—to say nothing that would be detrimental to privatisation.

For years I have praised Sir Denis Rooke, the chairman of British Gas, as being probably the best chairman of a nationalised industry since nationalisation measures went on to the statute book. I am sorry now to have to say that the chairman of British Gas, since the proposition has come forward, has behaved rather like a neutered tom. I wonder why he has behaved like that. As I have said, it is intolerable that the gag should have been applied to British Gas employees. One wonders how such an outspoken man as Sir Denis Rooke could have suddenly become the proverbial neutered tom. He has lost his tongue — *[Interruption.]* I will not go into the details about the neutered chairman of a nationalised industry as against a neutered tom cat.

I am outraged about this matter. I wonder why there is such a rush to get the Bill on to the statute book. There can be only one answer: that the Government want to make tax cuts to fulfil one of their election pledges to make the rich richer, and to go forward in the hope that they will survive the next election.

6.53 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): We have had an important and interesting debate, not the least important part of which was the contribution of the Leader of the House, which was exceedingly short. We know the reason for that. After 87 hours of debate in Committee, the Opposition believe that the Bill will be a disaster for the 16 million consumers, the workers within the industry and the future energy needs of the United Kingdom.

Many of the vital questions which the Opposition have raised during the passage of the Bill remain to be answered. The Government are racing through the Bill with extraordinary pace when one considers that it is one of the major pieces of legislation for this Parliament to deal with.

The Bill paves the way for the largest transfer of national assets and the transfer of enormous powers to a huge private monopoly. However, it is nothing more than an enabling Bill. The majority of the issues and decisions arising from such transfers of assets and powers are left out of the Bill. The proposals for maintaining and improving industrial relations within the industry, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) referred, and which the Opposition put forward, have been rejected in the Standing Committee.

We are also disturbed by the statements emanating from British Gas regarding the restrictions placed upon employees. I have a copy of the privatisation report of British Gas. It is extraordinary that even before the Bill has become an Act of Parliament, a publicly owned industry has put out privatisation reports advising employees that there are legal restrictions on what they can and cannot do. That is extraordinary when one considers the gag that the Government have put on municipal authorities. The privatisation report is the reverse of that point. I must tell Government and Sir Denis Rooke that that is not the way in which to ensure good industrial relations.

There is increasing disquiet among consumer and welfare organisations that all attempts that the Opposition have made to improve the legislation on their behalf have been resisted by the Government. In fact, any attempts to

[Mr. Stanley Orme]

write into the Bill justifiable safeguards for consumers, particularly the poor, the sick, disabled and elderly, have been rejected by the Government.

The hon. Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo) referred to the amendment accepted from my hon. Friend, the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), about the change of name from user council to consumer council. That is the sole concession that the Government have made during 87 hours of debate. Not one concession other than that has been given or any attention paid to the Opposition's attempts to improve the Bill. I hope that the country will note the Government's attitude in that regard.

I would like to raise the question of safety with the Secretary of State, as we have debated this issue on a number of occasions in Committee. The Opposition have debated the issue in a responsible manner, because we are concerned about maintaining safety levels. I want to draw the Secretary of State's attention to a daily press summary released by British Gas on 11 February. It states:

"The Government is preparing a white paper on relaxing health and safety laws in industry, according to *The Guardian*. Lord Young, the Employment Secretary, said yesterday that the paper would identify difficulties caused to employers by the 'law on health and safety.'"

Can the Secretary of State say whether these considerations affect British Gas? Will there be any alterations in the standards that presently apply? We are entitled to know of any changes as the Bill goes through the House. That statement rather refutes the undertakings that the Minister of State has quite fairly given to the Standing Committee to reflect his concern about safety. Is that a contradiction in Government thinking and policy?

I want to refer now to crucial information that has still not been given to the Standing Committee. What will be the effects of imports and exports of gas on British Gas plc and the overall British energy policy? We are within three weeks of concluding consideration of the Committee stage of the Bill. It is outrageous that we have not been told the Government's policy in regard to imports and exports. That matter concerns both sides of the Committee, and it was raised by the hon. Member for Southgate. The Secretary of State ought to bring us up to date and give us some information on that this evening.

We have still not received information about the gas levy and the extent of future Government intervention. Nor have we been told about the part that the golden share will play in the operation of British Gas plc and its control over foreign investment. A Department of Energy press release of 14 January 1986, which deals with the appointment of overseas financial advisers on the privatisation of British Gas, states that such advisers will operate on behalf of British Gas in the United States, Canada, Japan and Europe. We know what happened with British Telecom. When its shares were floated, a killing of about £200 million was made in one day on the stock exchange. What control will be provided by the golden share? How will it protect British interests? How will it protect possible strategic and military interests? We are entitled to know those facts, and we believe that that information should be given to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Since the Bill is nothing more than an enabling Bill, our debates in Committee are the only opportunity for hon. Members to discuss the conditions attached to the 25-year monopoly licence to be granted to British Gas plc. I draw the attention of the Leader of the House specifically to this matter. The Government's draft licence was hastily published on the eve of our Second Reading debate. The Committee stage has been the first and only real opportunity to debate the licence. Indeed, in clause 7(13), the Government abolish any right to formal representation or the receiving of objections to the draft licence. Therefore, we have had to use our debates on clauses 4 and 7 to expose the pathetic protection given to consumers on standing and collection charges, the abolition of legislative safeguards for staff in the industry, the absence of defined levels of service by a privatised BGC and major issues of safety. We make no apologies for the time that we have spent debating clause 7. It was our only real opportunity to debate the licence, which, as the Leader of the House knows, is outside the Bill. Clause 7(13) restricts the rights of private citizens to intervene with regard to the licence.

The Government wish to curtail our debates on important issues such as the golden share and limitations on foreign ownership. I should have thought that the Leader of the House would be especially sensitive to those issues after Westland and British Leyland. I make a personal plea to him to ensure that, before the guillotine falls on the second part of the Bill, the Department of Energy produces a draft of the articles of association.

Our debates have had two purposes: to discuss the major issues that are not contained in the enabling Bill; and, secondly, to fulfil the traditional role of the Opposition of trying to improve a bad Bill. The Bill gives little or no protection to the consumer, abolishes all forms of regional consumer councils, undermines the rights and interests of 93,000 employees in the industry, creates a pathetic Director General of Ofgas—a pale imitation of Oftel—and above all does nothing more than pave the way for the sale, at knockdown prices, of vital national assets.

The parallel with British Telecom is plain for all to see. The conversion of a public monopoly into a private monopoly solely for the Government to use the money to give tax handouts at an appropriate time is the real purpose of the Bill, and that is why we oppose it.

7.5 pm

The Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Peter Walker): I cannot claim to be a connoisseur of guillotine debates, since this is only the second such debate that I have attended since I have been privileged to be a Member of the House. My views on guillotines are consistent: when in government I favour them and when in opposition I am against them. Several hon. Members share that view. However, the Liberal party has always remained solid, reliable and consistent about guillotine motions. Liberal Members, not having been in government for years, always oppose guillotine motions.

The other guillotine debate in which I participated was on the Transport Bill in 1968. I am delighted to see the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in his place, because I recall that in that debate he passionately argued his theoretical opposition to guillotine motions, but said that he would support it in that case. He put the position of the Liberal party more correctly and vividly than most, with the family interest that he has always had in both parties, when he said:

"It is easier for Liberals to speak on guillotine Motions than on some others. I say that as one who comes from a Liberal family. The Liberals have not had the duty or the opportunity of exercising

powers of government for quite a long time now, and perhaps they find it easier than some others to be consistent on guillotine Motions. I would remind him, however, that it was the Liberal party which introduced the idea of guillotine Motions in the first place, and it was the party which introduced the most severe restrictions on the freedom of speech that this House has ever introduced. At the time of the operations of the Irish Parliamentary Party, the Liberals introduced the closure and many of the devices which we now find convenient. They did that when they exercised the powers of Government."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1968; Vol. 760, c. 1701-2.]

I understand the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) is continuing that tradition. He also continues other traditions of the Liberal party on such measures. His speech, like his speeches in Committee, was based on the fact that he favours something else, but he never defined what the something else was. That has been a convenience for the Liberal party for a long time. Also in the best traditions of the Liberal party, he has one view about what should happen in the gas industry, and the Social Democratic party has another view.

A short time ago the leader of the SDP—presumably briefed by the great Liberal Social Democrat, Mr. Sam Brittan—said that the SDP favoured giving British Gas shares to everyone, that everyone should have an equal share and that there should be X million shareholders. When cross-examined on what that meant, we discovered that shareholders would not have votes, because that might be dangerous, and that they could not express their views on some issues, because that, too, might be dangerous. Nevertheless, the right hon. Gentleman believed that British Gas should be privatised in that way. We have heard no such proposals from the Liberal party. It believes that British Gas should be broken up, but it does not say into how many pieces and it does not say which pieces would be allowed to do what. It has not examined in any depth what that breaking up would do to the British Gas Corporation. It is just another nice, vague, flimsy idea. We admire the Liberal party for its consistently vague ideas about what should be done and also for being against all forms of guillotine.

The right hon. Member for Salford East (Mr. Orme) criticised my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House for making rather a short speech. I never criticise Members for that. [HON. MEMBERS: "Sit down".] I am quite happy to do that.

The shadow Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), commented on how remarkably short my right hon. Friend's speech was. We therefore sat back, relaxing, expecting to hear a lengthy and devastating analysis of the Bill from the right hon. Gentleman. But what do we find? My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House spoke for eight minutes and the shadow Leader of the House for nine minutes. The right hon. Gentleman's speech, therefore, gave us a greater appreciation of the Bill. We also appreciated his great depth of analysis. I hope that my right hon. Friend will be chastised, and that in future he will speak for nine minutes instead of the dilatory eight minutes.

The function of the shadow Leader of the House is to attend this type of debate. The right hon. Gentleman had the appropriate brief. I do not know whether he takes briefs fom Transport House—half the Labour party does and half does not. The right hon. Gentleman's speech was good party line stuff—all the clichés, platitudes, fears and hostilities about gas privatisation were summarised in his speech. In fairness, the right hon. Gentleman did not argue enthusiastically that this was an unreasonable guillotine motion.

My one experience of the guillotine motion was when I led for the Opposition against the Transport Bill in 1968. It was not a major Bill. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) suggested that the Gas Bill would be the most important Bill in his lifetime. He suggested that the Committee had done well to get through 13 clauses so quickly. The hon. Gentleman said it was outrageous, when everything was going so speedily, that the Government should be vicious and wicked enough to introduce a guillotine motion.

If the hon. Gentleman feels like that, imagine how I felt in 1968. After 91 hours we had got through not 13 clauses, but 37 clauses, six schedules and 488 amendments. Despite such vigorous progress, the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent was one of those who supported the imposition of the guillotine. What is more, the right hon. Gentleman criticised me, as Opposition spokesman, because I had obviously not done my job properly by allowing so much to get through so quickly. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North used the speedy progress that has been made on the Gas Bill as a basis for his argument. That is pretty nasty criticism of his right hon. Friends. In fairness to them, I hasten to add that the criticism is in no way justified.

The Opposition Front Bench spokesmen in Committee have shown diligence and great application. It is difficult to praise them because it will obviously do them great damage in future shadow Cabinet elections, and I have no desire to do that. I am aware, as one who opposed legislation in opposition, that facilites are somewhat limited, and the civil servants are not operating behind one. I admire the right hon. Member for Salford, East and the hon. Member for Methyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) for the many hours they have spent in preparation for the Committee and for the many hours they have spent listening to the opponents of the Bill. Their difficulty has been the degree of repetition, because they have had to listen to the same voices repeating such opposition. Nevertheless, they have spent a great deal of time on the first 13 clauses.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who has played such an active part in Committee on the subject of safety, said how much we had skimped on a number of issues in Committee. The hon. Lady made two speeches of an hour each on one clause. If that is what she calls skimping, heaven knows what she is like when she decides to apply her mind further to such problems. The hon. Lady by "skimping" on these matters gave us a great deal of pleasure in the hours when she spoke. I shall not repeat one or two suggestions made by the Chairman of our Committee—that some of the matters the hon. Lady talked about were not quite in the context of the amendments we were discussing. However, the hon. Lady has rightly taken an interest in safety.

I defend the guillotine motion. This legislation was assiduously prepared, long before it came to the House. One of the interesting factors about legislation, from whichever party in government it might come, is that there are times when Governments, for perfectly reasonable and valid political reasons, decide speedily to bring forward a piece of legislation. If a Government do that, there tends to be a whole range of problems about drafting, the parliamentary counsel, and so on. Thus, a large number

[Mr. Peter Walker]

of Government as well as Opposition amendments have to be moved. The right hon. Member for Salford, East knows that this has been limited. Very few Government amendments have had to be moved due to incompetent drafting or failure to deal with the points concerned.

Before the Government decided to privatise the gas industry they carefully examined the way in which this legislation would deal with all aspects of the industry. We looked at the problems of safety in great depth. Obviously it would be totally detrimental to the interests of British Gas if there were any doubts about its safety policies. If they were put in doubt, it would be a matter of great joy to competitors.

I have a slight suspicion—perhaps based on the fact that I have been a Member of this House for 25 years—that the Opposition might endeavour to convey to the public that the safety of gas services would be put in jeopardy. Anybody who examines the Committee stage of the Bill in depth will find that no valid argument had been made at any time about the deterioration of safety standards. My hon. Friends have been able to argue with complete satisfaction that we have improved the safety provisions of British Gas. British Gas is in favour of these provisions. The future arrangements for the safety provision of British Gas will be better than they are now.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley said that safety was at one time the responsibility of the Department of Energy. One could argue that there was a joint interest in safety. I think the move to the Health and Safety Executive was an improvement. The safety provisions were handled independently by people interested only in safety. There was no connection with commercial success or failure or the financial cost to British Gas. I rejoiced when the safety responsibility was moved to the Health and Safety Executive. It has recently announced that it intends to devote 60 per cent. of the inspectors' time to checking the safety requirements of British Gas. That is more than was previously done when the responsibility was that of the Department of Energy. Therefore, in terms of inspectors and the provision of safety there is an improvement. We welcomed the opportunity to point that out in Committee, and we shall continue to do so.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): I am extremely gratified by the glowing tribute to the Health and Safety Executive, which I set up. What does the right hon. Gentleman say here or in the Cabinet about the cut in the inspectorate and the number of people who will be doing the job? Will he go back to the Cabinet and say that we need more money for more inspectors?

Mr. Walker: The Health and Safety Executive has recently announced that its inspectors will be able to devote 60 per cent. more time to the safety aspects of the gas industry than previously. It is a substantial improvement in which I rejoice.

Another aspect concerns consumer interests. When preparing the Bill, we were determined to see that the consumer was protected.

The hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) is building up a major cause over the closure of a showroon in his constituency. The right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) said that he would be guillotined in two places—by us here and by the management committee of his local Labour party. We take pleasure in the guillotine here, but regret the other one. He implied that the closures were all part of the preparation for privatisation, and directed against the hon. Member for Burnley because of his views.

There were showroom closures long before there was any talk of privatisation. Since 1983, the BGC has closed 50 showrooms a year in the normal course of its business. That has nothing to do with privatisation. If the hon. Gentleman argues that a showroom closure is to help privatisation, what will he say about the new showrooms that have been opened recently? Is the corporation pursuing an opposite policy? British Gas has reviewed its showrooms for some years. Where they have been unnecessary or have not given the service people require or the costs have outweighed the benefit, the BGC has moved and closed showrooms. No new policy has been pursued. By keeping the BGC in one piece, it will be able to decide on the service to its customers and to the public which best suits the industry's reputation and effectiveness.

Mr. Pike: I am not speaking about a particular showroom. If what the Secretary of State has said is correct, why did the Government not table an amendment in Committee that would guarantee a network of showrooms throughout the country?

Mr. Walker: It would have been absurd to table such an amendment. It would be absurd for a load of politicians to sit here and say what showrooms the BGC should have. Instead, the BGC may decide on a whole range of things, including those which may improve its connections with its customers.

The hon. Gentleman fails to realise, as does the Labour party, that one of the great advantages of giving British Gas freedom from political intervention is that, if it decides that it is in its interests substantially to increase the number of showrooms, it can do so. If it decides to go into partnership with private enterprise in showrooms, it can do so. It will decide the best policy to pursue to obtain happier and more contented customers supporting the industry.

Mr. Rogers: Is the Secretary of State saying that he oppressively controls the number of showrooms that the BGC has?

Mr. Walker: Over the years, chaps sitting in the Department of Energy—some representing the Labour party and some the Conservative party—have had all sorts of discussions about how the corporation should invest. There was the classic example of the Labour Government who were in trouble with the IMF. The IMF said, "You must find £200 million more." The Labour Government went along to the corporation and said, "Put up your gas prices, chaps, and we can meet the IMF's demands." Those people who argue that nationalised gas provides a great service for consumers have only to study the way in which a Labour Government put up gas prices against consumers' interests.

We have introduced a customer organisation in the Bill. We have studied what is required. I believe that it will be a more efficient consumer operation than anything we have seen in the past. In Committee, we have been able to defend the legislation because we know that it deals with safety and consumer needs effectively.

The Opposition are frustrated because they know that no valid argument against privatisation of the BGC has been put forward in Committee. The argument for privatisation is clear.

The importance of research and development was mentioned in Committee. It is interesting to note how often the BGC's research programmes have been clawed over by the Treasury in the past. There have been limitations on the application of some of the research. Those limitations will not exist after privatisation. The BGC has undertaken a great deal of research, but under both Labour and Tory Governments the corporation has been allowed to benefit only to a small extent from that research.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): The BGC had the courage to spend money on the Wytch Farm project. Many private companies were not interested in it.

Mr. Walker: I have never said that the corporation has not had many fine and remarkable achievements. Given the freedom of its new role, and its skills and talents, the corporation will be able to continue with such projects. The Opposition are frustrated because they know that the employees have no passionate hostility to privatisation.

I have every confidence that we shall be able vigorously to defend the legislation in any future debates. I am also delighted to know that the Labour party, the Scottish National party, and the Liberal party are all against privatisation. By the time of the next election, when the employees, the consumers and the public have benefited from privatisation, I look forward to those three parties being in favour of renationalisation of the BGC.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 195.

Division No. 77] **[7.26 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Key, Robert
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter

Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Ron Davies.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the following provisions shall apply to the remaining proceedings on the Bill:—

Committee

1.—(1) The Standing Committee to which the Bill is allocated shall report the Bill to the House on or before 6th March 1986.

(2) Proceedings on the Bill at a sitting of the Standing Committee on the said 6th March may continue until Ten o'clock, whether or not the House is adjourned before that time, and if the House is adjourned before those proceedings have been brought to a conclusion the Standing Committee shall report the Bill to the House on 7th March.

Report and Third Reading

2.—(1) The proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading of the Bill shall be completed in two allotted days and shall be brought to a conclusion at Seven o'clock on the second of those days; and for the purposes of Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) this Order shall be taken to allot to the proceedings on Consideration such part of those days as the Resolution of the Business Committee may determine.

(2) The Business Committee shall report to the House its Resolutions as to the proceedings on Consideration of the Bill, and as to the allocation of time between those proceedings and proceedings on Third Reading, not later than the fourth day on which the House sits after the day on which the Chairman of the Standing Committee reports the Bill to the House.

(3) The Resolutions in any Report made under Standing Order No. 45 may be varied by a further Report so made, whether or not within the time specified in sub-paragraph (2) above, and whether or not the Resolutions have been agreed to by the House.

(4) The Resolutions of the Business Committee may include alterations in the order in which proceedings on Consideration of the Bill are taken.

Procedure in Standing Committee

3.—(1) At a sitting of the Standing Committee at which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion under a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee the Chairman shall not adjourn the Committee under any Order relating to the sittings of the Committee until the proceedings have been brought to a conclusion.

(2) No Motion shall be moved in the Standing Committee relating to the sitting of the Committee except by a member of the Government, and the Chairman shall permit a brief explanatiory statement from the Member who makes, and from a Member who opposes, the Motion, and shall then put the Question thereon.

4. No Motion shall be moved to alter the order in which Clauses, Schedules, new Clauses and new Schedules are to be taken in the Standing Committee but the Resolutions of the Business Sub-Committee may include alterations in that order.

Conclusion of proceedings in Committee

5. On the conclusion of the proceedings in any Committee on the Bill the Chairman shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

Dilatory Motions

6. No dilatory Motion with respect to, or in the course of, proceedings on the Bill shall be made in the Standing Committee or on an allotted day except by a member of the Government, and the Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

Extra time on allotted days

7.—(1) On an allotted day paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings on the Bill for two hours after Ten o'clock.

(2) Any period during which proceedings on the Bill may be proceeded with after Ten o'clock under paragraph (7) of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) shall be in addition to the said period of two hours.

(3) If the first allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, a period of time equal to the duration of the proceedings upon that Motion shall be added to the said period of two hours.

Private business

8. Any private business which has been set down for consideration at Seven o'clock on an allotted day shall, instead of being considered as provided by Standing Orders, be considered at the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill on that day, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the private business for a period of three hours from the conclusion of the proceedings on the Bill or, if those proceedings are concluded before Ten o'clock, for a period equal to the time elapsing between Seven o'clock and the conclusion of those proceedings.

Conclusion of proceedings

9.—(1) For the purpose of bringing to a conclusion any proceedings which are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or the Business Sub-Committee and which have not previously been brought to a conclusion, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions (but no others)—

(a) any Question already proposed from the Chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed (including, in the case of a new Clause or new Schedule which has been read a second time, the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill);

(c) the Question on any amendment or Motion standing on the Order Paper in the name of any Member, if that amendment or Motion is moved by a member of the Government;

(d) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded;

and on a Motion so moved for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chairman or Mr. Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(2) Proceedings under sub-paragraph (1) above shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(3) If an allotted day is one on which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) would, apart from this Order, stand over to Seven o'clock—

(a) that Motion shall stand over until the conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion at or before that time;

(b) the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion after that time shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

(4) If an allotted day is one to which a Motion for the adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 stands over from an earlier day, the bringing to a conclusion of any proceedings on the Bill which, under this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee, are to be brought to a conclusion on that day shall be postponed for a period equal to the duration of the proceedings on that Motion.

Supplemental orders

10.—(1) The proceedings on any Motion made in the House by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order (including anything which might have been the subject of a report of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee) shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion one hour after they have been commenced, and paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business) shall apply to the proceedings.

(2) If on an allotted day on which any proceedings on the Bill are to be brought to a conclusion at a time appointed by this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee the House is adjourned, or the sitting is suspended, before that time no notice shall be required of a Motion made at the next sitting by a member of the Government for varying or supplementing the provisions of this Order.

Saving

11. Nothing in this Order or a Resolution of the Business Committee or Business Sub-Committee shall—

(a) prevent any proceedings to which the Order or Resolution applies from being taken or completed earlier than is required by the Order or Resolution, or

(b) prevent any business (whether on the Bill or not) from being proceeded with on any day after the completion of all such proceedings on the Bill as are to be taken on that day.

Recommittal

12.—(1) References in this Order to proceedings on Consideration or proceedings on Third Reading include references to proceedings, at those stages respectively, for, on or in consequence of recommittal.

(2) On an allotted day no debate shall be permitted on any Motion to recommit the Bill (whether as a whole or otherwise), and Mr. Speaker shall put forthwith any Question necessary to dispose of the Motion, including the Question on any amendment moved to the Question.

Interpretation

13. In this Order—

"allotted day" means any day (other than a Friday) on which the Bill is put down as first Government Order of the Day provided that a Motion for allotting time to the proceedings on the Bill to be taken on that day either has been agreed on a previous day or is set down for consideration on that day;

"the Bill" means the Gas Bill;

"Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Sub-Committee as agreed to by the Standing Committee;

"Resolution of the Business Committee" means a Resolution of the Business Committee as agreed to by the House.

Orders of the Day

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill [*Lords*]:

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Mr. Speaker has not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am a little surprised at what you have just said, because many Second Reading amendments have been selected recently by Mr. Speaker on behalf of the so-called Social Democratic party and Liberal party alliance. The number of SDP and Liberal alliance Members does not equal the numbers of those hon. Members who have put their names to the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). As so many Second Reading alliance amendments have been accepted recently, why has my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton's amendment not been accepted? More than 30 hon. Members have put their names to it. Is an explanation not necessary?

Mr. Henry Cohen (Leyton) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I shall deal with each point in turn. I have announced Mr. Speaker's decision. The hon. Gentleman and the House know that Mr. Speaker never gives the reasons for his decision.

Mr. Cohen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I heard your answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), but Mr. Speaker is the guardian of the rights of Back Benchers. It should not be just amendments that have been put down by the Opposition Front Bench or by other political parties that are accepted——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now getting very close to disputing Mr. Speaker's decision. The hon. Gentleman may wish to speak in the debate, in which case he will have a full opportunity to express his views.

7.41 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House has before it a great prize if we can legislate successfully on this difficult matter, by which I mean a Bill which is not just rammed through in a partisan spirit, but which is sufficiently acceptable to endure.

In 1876 Parliament passed the first legislation of any country in the world to control the use of live animals in experiments that might cause pain. The 1876 Act was a response to some horrifying reports from abroad about the practice of surgical procedures on live animals without inducing anaesthesia.

The 1876 Act has stood the test of time well, despite the enormous scope of developments in the biomedical sciences; developments which its authors could not possibly have foreseen. The principle embodied in that Act has been sustained by a developing system of administrative controls. Therefore, Home Secretaries, with the invaluable help of the inspectorate, have been able to go on applying the spirit of the Act, in the face of many world changes which might otherwise have overwhelmed it. Scientists and researchers have seen it as part of their role to be conscientious in conforming to the controls and to be creative in helping the inspectorate and Home Secretaries to adapt and develop the licensing system for experimental work on animals. We have nothing to be ashamed of in the story of this subject since the 1876 Act, or of the climate of responsible, humane research, in which our nation is fortunate. However, the universal view now is that we have to move on.

There are limits to the usefulness of adaptation, however well intentioned and worth while. There is general recognition that the time has come to review and alter the Act. The range and scale of work performed under the legislation have expanded enormously in the last 110 years. There have been fundamental and highly significant developments in our understanding of animals and their needs and in the public concern for animal welfare. That is why we need a new statute, one which builds upon the solid foundation of our experience, reflects today's needs and concerns and makes suitable allowance for future developments and discoveries.

Every right hon. and hon. Member knows that animal experiments arouse peculiar emotion. Every right hon. and hon. Member also knows that sometimes the subject is dealt with in crude propaganda which does not present the facts but distorts, exaggerates and invents them. But sometimes there is genuine emotion in the letters and the conversations. Therefore, we are all forced to think through our philosophy. We must set some limit upon the adverse effect on the animal, whatever the benefits achieved, but we cannot overlook the great benefits which animal experiments have brought to both humans and animals and the important work which remains to be done.

There are a few people who see no need to strike this balance. At the other end of the argument, there are a few people whose view is so absolute that they are not interested in the views of other people. However, for the overwhelming majority, I hope, of hon. Members and, I am sure, of the public, a balance needs to be struck. We have sought to strike that balance in the Bill.

Many right hon. and hon. Members will remember, or will have read of, the days when diseases such as polio, smallpox, diphtheria and tuberculosis brought death and misery to many thousands of people. It was not all that long ago that infections and sceptic wounds, which would now be treated with antibiotics, went untreated. The great reduction in suffering, and the great improvements in our health and well-being, are owed in large measure to animal experiments.

Scientists have worked hard to reduce the use of animals in their research and to find ways of avoiding and minimising pain. Much work is being done now, with our support, to develop new alternative methods, but the use of live animals unfortunately remains necessary in many areas of biological and medical research if we are to safeguard the health and well-being of the individual and the community.

Fundamental research into the workings of the body and the causes of disease is as essential as ever. Therefore, it is irresponsible to suggest, as some have, that we can bring medical and scientific progress to a halt because, it is alleged, we have enough cures and enough knowledge to cope with the diseases which afflict so many people, or to

suggest that certain types of research should not be permitted. That line of argument does not stand up to examination. A moment's thought brings to mind the great number of diseases and conditions for which a solution or improved treatment is still urgently needed. Heart disease, cancer, and AIDS are three obvious examples. The House could think of many more.

It has been suggested that all research into psychology and behaviour involving animals should be prohibited, but our understanding of the workings of the mind and of the many disorders of behaviour is still in its infancy. Skilled research in this area has already brought considerable benefits, and it is clearly vital that it should continue. Another criticism is that research involving tobacco or alcohol should be stopped, on the ground that they are supposedly self-induced ills. I do not think that that argument stands up, either, in serious debate.

The mechanisms by which substances such as alcohol and tobacco act, and the processes of dependence to which they lead, are still not fully understood. Their effects are not limited to the individual user who brings things on himself, as any hapless victim of a drunken driver can attest. Research into disease and illness has to continue. Safety testing is also vital, and here, too, although alternative methods have developed quite rapidly, we still have to make use of animal experiments.

Where beneficial drugs and vaccines have been developed they must be tested to ensure their safety, and we must ensure that each of the enormous number of other products and substances which people may use or come into contact with do not present a hazard to health. It is difficult to imagine us picking and choosing here. For example, it is sometimes said that the safety testing of some substances, such as cosmetics, should not be allowed if it involves the use of animals. We may hear that argument this evening and hereafter. Most tests of cosmetic substances are now carried out without the use of animals, but sometimes such tests are still needed. Cosmetics include soap, toothpaste, shampoo and many other substances which are used every day. These experiments amount to 0·5 per cent. of animal experiments in this country, but we are dealing with substances which have to be safe.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Is the Secretary of State saying that he cannot differentiate between experiments on animals in connection with, say, finding the cause of cancer, and those for alcohol and nicotine-related diseases? To put it another way, he could simply ban the sale of alcohol and tobacco and therefore eradicate the diseases. He could not ban cancer, so there must be a difference, and he cannot keep them together.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been following my argument. I was not making the same argument in both cases. I said that there was still a good deal of ignorance about the effects of tobacco and alcohol and the dependence that they induce, and that since that dependence and those effects can affect for the worse many people who may not be directly using alcohol and tobacco, it must be right that research into these things should continue. Occasionally that involves the use of animals, and that was the case that I was making.

I had moved to the safety issue and the vexed question of cosmetics. I understand that there is an amendment in the names of several hon. Members on this point, and I appreciate the anxiety that exists about two safety tests, the Draize test on eye irritancy, and the LD50 toxicity test. A great deal of work has been done to minimise the use of these tests and replace them with less severe procedures. I understand that in most cases where the Draize test is used it stops short of the end points laid down in international regulations. We shall soon issue guidelines on the use of this test, designed to maximise the use of less severe procedures for eye testing, and the LD50 test has increasingly been replaced by limit tests. We shall continue to encourage these developments, but while there remains some circumstances in which the more severe tests are necessary to ensure the proper degree of safety such testing must continue, though subject to rigorous control.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we are to monitor closely the LD50 tests, and we have been assured that they will be monitored closely, it is necessary to know how many such tests there are each year?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will be able to deal positively with the general desire for more accurate statistics about the total and nature of future tests. We have a clear duty to allow the continuation of scientific research using animals. Against that is the other principle that I have mentioned, the duty to prevent unnecessary suffering, and the unnecessary use of animals in scientific procedures. The meeting of both those obligations underlies the Bill.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Before the right hon. Gentleman leaves that point, may I say that the LD50 test raises an enormous amount of emotion and heat? Quite clearly, there is in the mind of the public some kind of problem relating LD50 to toxicity tests. Before any drug or medicament is loosed upon the public, it is essential for its toxicity to be tested. That testing involves animals, but not necessarily in the way that LD50 previously worked. The people who are doing the testing know that, and LD50 will eventually be phased out.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is right. We have to encourage all the bodies concerned, including the international regulatory bodies, to go on looking closely at the need for LD50 tests. We must also ensure through the system of project licensing in the Bill that alternative methods — and all the time we are moving towards alternative methods—are used wherever possible. The spirit of the Bill is exactly the spirit of the point that the hon. Gentleman makes.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): I am unwilling to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman, but he will know that the draft Home Office guidance on the operation of the Bill was lodged in the Vote Office today. Can he tell us the status of this guidance, and is he able to give us an assurance that this guidance will be debatable in Committee on the Bill?

Mr. Hurd: It is for the Chairman of a Standing Committee to decide on the scope of discussions. I should be surprised if it was not possible, with the co-operation of my hon. Friend, to ensure that the main points which appear in the guidance also find a place in the discussions of the Standing Committee. With a bit of will on all sides, that will not be too difficult.

[Mr. Hurd]

I should like to make progress on the contents of the Bill, because there will be plenty of scope for hon. Members to speak. Its origins go back to a lot of patient work by the Littlewood committee, which reported in 1965, and by the Select Committee in another place, which reported in 1980 on Lord Halsbury's Bill. In 1981 the Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments submitted its proposals for a framework of new legislation. Our proposals owe much to all this work and, of course, were foreshadowed in the two White Papers published by this Government.

The Council of Europe has produced a convention, which will shortly be open for signature, and we played a leading part in drafting that. The convention sets a common minimum standard for controls on animal experiments, and our controls under the Bill will be tighter still. A few months before the first White Paper was published the British Veterinary Association, the Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation, and the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments put forward their own proposals. Their thinking was along similar lines to our own, and since then we have consulted closely with their representatives. There has been invaluable advice and support from science and industry. I must mention the great contribution of Lord Houghton of Sowerby, who has earned the title of the elder statesman of animal welfare because of his tireless campaigning for reform. He has been prolific in his advice and admonition. We in the Government and all who are concerned for animals owe him a great debt.

I should like to say a word in commendation of my hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), who is sitting beside me. For a long time he has worked tirelessly to bring together a coalition, an understanding, between people who may have started with different points of view but who have worked together to make the Bill possible and successful. Hon. Members know that my hon. Friend has done that at some personal cost, but it is a remarkable achievement, which I hope will be continued during the passage of the Bill.

The Bill is a response to growing pressure from all sides for reform. It is the result of the consensus that I have been talking about, and that consensus, that wide-ranging support, was reflected in the debates in another place, where a number of significant improvements were made in response to helpful suggestions for change, without the need for one Division. If the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) is to steer the Opposition during the Committee stage of the Bill, if it gets a Second Reading, I strongly commend to him the example set in another place.

The Bill contains many more detailed provisions than the Act that it replaces, but it is, to a large extent, an enabling measure. It bans hardly anything, but it controls everything.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): Banning hardly anything is what is wrong with it.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend will be able to develop that point, and I am sure that he will do so with some regard for the balance of which I have been speaking.

The details of the control are left to the Secretary of State, and I am sure that that fact will attract some attention and even criticism. However, that provision is important, because there must be administrative flexibility to deal with widely varying individual circumstances and to reflect the changes in science and in our understanding of animals and their needs, which lie ahead. That is the basic character of the Bill.

The detailed workings of the controls will be made public through the guidance note. The draft has been revised in the light of the many comments that we have received and of the changes made to the Bill in another place. Copies of the revised draft are available in the Vote Office.

The heart of the Bill is the new system of dual licensing. As happens now, a personal licence authorising an individual to carry out particular procedures on animals will be required, but, in addition, a project licence, specifying the detail and limits of the programme of work that is authorised, will also be required. No work may be done without the authority of both kinds of licence.

A project licence will be granted only if the proposed work appears justified. In addition, detailed conditions limiting the severity of procedures will be applied to each project. The Bill also makes new provision for arrangements for the care of laboratory animals and, for the first time, controls the breeding and supply of animals used in scientific or experimental procedures. It extends control to areas not covered by the 1876 Act, such as the use of animals for the production of antisera or the passage of tumours, and the breeding of laboratory animals with inherited defects.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Clauses 3 to 5 mention project licences and I have examined those clauses carefully. I should like to know who will advise the Home Secretary on the suitability of a project.

Some people are extremely worried about experiments on animals, but, from my experience, I believe that projects are already pretty well controlled and that few mavericks carry on the experimentation of which people accuse them. I hope that the Home Secretary will allay my fears by telling me that his advisers will not make it more difficult for genuine experiments to take place.

Mr. Hurd: The short answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is that I shall be advised by the inspectorate, which can call on assessors. The advisory committee, which is dealt with in clause 19, will be in the background. I hope that when the machinery is in place and has gained experience it will be able to work quickly and practically so that the hon. Gentleman's fears, which I understand, will not arise.

I shall not go through all the details of the Bill. I have explained the principles behind it, and I shall merely emphasise one or two key features. Clause 1 states that the protection of the Bill extends to all living vertebrate animals other than man. Unlike the 1876 Act, the Bill provides that immature forms of animals are protected if they reach, or are going to reach, specified stages of development.

Clause 2 defines what is meant by a "regulated procedure". That definition is important. Clause 3 prohibits anyone from carrying out a regulated procedure on a protected animal unless it is properly authorised under both a personal and a project licence. Acting without the proper authority of both types of licence will be an offence punishable by the substantial penalties set out in clause 22.

The two types of licence are established by clauses 4 and 5. The personal licence has to ensure that only suitable and competent people are able to carry out work on live animals. It will define the limits of an individual's authority, which will be set after rigorous scrutiny of his qualifications, training and experience.

It is important to note that under the new controls all applicants for project licences will have to declare that they have considered alternatives to the use of live animals and rejected them on good grounds. Without that assurance, they will not be granted the authority that they seek.

The project licence issued under clause 5 will specify what may be done in the programme of work to which it applies, including the animals that may be used and the procedures that may be performed. The place where procedures are carried out has to be specified and so, in both the project and the personal licence, do the people doing the work. There will be detailed conditions.

Clause 10 requires certain conditions to be imposed in all cases, including, in particular, conditions limiting the degree of pain or suffering to which an animal may be exposed. All personal licences will include a condition requiring any animal that is suffering severe pain which cannot be alleviated to be killed painlessly forthwith. Within that universal upper limit, there will be further conditions limiting the severity of procedures.

Clauses 6 and 7 provide for the control of laboratories at which animals are used in experimental work and of establishments which breed or supply the kinds of animal most commonly used in procedures.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I have been listening carefully to my right hon. Friend. Am I right in thinking that, in future, cats and dogs will have had to be specially bred for experimental purposes, and that the practice of taking cats and dogs from the streets—very little of that goes on at present, but it is worrying to many people—will be eliminated?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. That is implicit in what I have said, and I understand that that will be the case.

Having galloped through the clauses, I should say a word about the Advisory Committee on Animal Experiments, which is also part of the Bill. That is another source of valuable advice on existing controls and it must be right that a committee established to provide advice on this difficult, specialised subject should have a high level of medical, veterinary and scientific experience. The work of the commmittee has proved beyond doubt that such expertise and a high concern of animal welfare are often combined. We have been lucky in persuading distinguished representatives from the different disciplines to serve on the committee and to add to the contribution made by the lay members of the committee, including, as they should, representatives of animal welfare organisations.

The existing committee has ably carried out its task of helping my predecessors and myself to balance the needs of animals against the needs of science and industry. The controls introduced by the Bill require me to continue that balance and, in clauses 19 and 20, establish the Animal Procedures Committee, which will take over the work carried out so well by the advisory committee.

During the debates in another place a number of suggestions were made about the composition and terms of reference of the new committee, and they are now reflected in the Bill.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): Will my right hon. Friend accept from me the gratitude of many people for introducing the Bill so conscientiously, and particularly for deciding to introduce it so early in the parliamentary programme?

The goodwill established between the Home Office and many animal welfare bodies through the introduction of the Bill — the Home Office has listened to the representations of those bodies—will continue only as long as the number of experiments on animals reduces from year to year and amendments in Committee are discussed constructively.

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that both those results will be forthcoming, for different reasons. What my hon. Friend says is true. People will accept the need for a number of animal experiments, provided that they are shown to be necessary—the control in the Bill will ensure that—and that an effort is being made to reduce them.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Will not this committee have a vital role to play? There is some concern about the membership and the list of names from which my right hon. Friend will select the members. Will he encourage hon. Members to submit names for consideration?

Mr. Hurd: I am always delighted to receive suggestions from all right hon. and hon. Members as to how I should exercise the powers of appointment that the House has given to me, and that will continue to be so. The Committee will want to spend some time on clause 19, if the House gives the Bill a Second Reading. It is a careful attempt to reach a balance on membership of the advisory committee. It is right that the Home Secretary should have such guidance before he starts making any appointments.

Clauses 22 to 26 make various provisions for the punishment and enforcement of criminal offences under the Bill. The most serious offences are triable either summarily or on indictment and, if on indictment, carry penalties of up to two years imprisonment, or a fine, or both. I hope that that shows that we are determined to ensure that the courts have the ability to deal firmly with breaches of the law in this area.

We are pleased that we have managed to find a legislative slot in this Session, which was at one time in doubt. We are pleased that the Bill received warm support in the other place, and has support generally. That support is much wider than would have been expected two or three years ago. It comes from the moderate parts of the animal welfare movement, from the veterinary profession and from science and industry, and we are grateful for suggestions that have come from all these quarters.

There has been scope for further elaboration and refinement of points of detail and application. That process has been carried out in the other place, and I am sure that it will be continued here. I believe, from the start that we have made, that the overwhelming majority of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House will want to continue in a thoughtful and non-partisan way to sustain the consensus that we have so far managed to achieve.

We all know that we have to think through these things seriously and gravely, and that what is at stake is what we mean by "humanitarian behaviour". The Bill tries to provide a framework within which these decisions can be made, to authorise scientific or experimental work on living animals and to enable those decisions to be based

[Mr. Hurd]

on a careful assessment of the likely cost to animals and the likely benefits to our species and to other animals. I do not pretend that that is not difficult and does not arouse many emotions, but we are heartened by the support that has been shown.

The Bill cannot satisfy everybody. It will not satisfy those who believe that there should be no experiments on living animals, and it will not satisfy those who are impatient of controls because they think that they go too far in restricting benefits to the human race and other animals that experiments can produce. I hope the House will feel that the Bill is a serious and conscientious effort to tackle the issue in a practical way which makes good use of the unique knowledge and experience of this country, and that we can justify, by our discussions in this place, the wisdom of all those who have thought and worked so hard on the subject.

8.13 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): It is right to remind the House that the Labour party was the first major political party to spell out its attitude to animal welfare, in a document entitled "Living without Cruelty", published in 1978. That was followed by specific election pledges in the 1979 manifesto, which in turn encouraged other parties to make similar promises. I say that not in a narrow party political sense, but simply so that the record may be accurate. It has fallen to the Government to introduce this long-awaited legislation. As it has taken 110 years, it is as well that nobody was holding his breath. I congratulate the Government on crossing over to this side of the road, on showing a much better understanding of the demands of animal welfare organisations and on trying to respond to such demands.

The Bill has two principal authors. The first—and I put this author first deliberately—is my noble Friend Lord Houghton, whose persistence and diligence over many years has helped to forge a coalition of unity and common sense to secure the wide range of agreement on which the Bill is based.

The other author is Clive Hollands who has played such an outstanding role in the animal welfare movement in bringing people together. It is to Clive Hollands that we are indebted, in his book "Compassion is the Bugler", for the best definition of animal welfare. He wrote:

> "This then would be my definition of animal welfare: dignity, according to animals the natural dignity which is due to them as living, sentient creatures . . . My only concern is the suffering we inflict on animals whether it be for food, clothing, knowledge, sport or pleasure. If we could learn to respect and accord to animals the dignity which is their due as living beings, suffering, pain and torment would end."

I support the Home Secretary's commendation of the work of the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, who I know has had an open-minded approach in the discussions with all those involved in the preparation of the Bill. He may or may not feel that this commendation is helpful to his career.

I acknowledge the criticisms of some of my right hon. and hon. Friends and others about the inadequacies of the Bill. It is not as if it has been rushed. New legislation was called for by the Littlewood committee in 1965, and the Halsbury committee in 1980. The Home Secretary's advisory committee joined in in 1983, as did the triple alliance of the British Veterinary Association, the Committee for the Reform of Animal Experimentation and the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments in the same year.

Against that background, I have to tell the Government that the Bill is not adequate to what needs to be done. The machinery that it plans to put in place, while an improvement over the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, needs to be strengthened. We shall look to Parliament and the Government to improve the Bill as it goes through, if it gets a Second Reading.

I believe that science should be for life, not death, and that to some extent, science and the scientists have failed us. It is in many senses incredible that, after all these years and millions of experiments upon live animals, we know so little. If we can generally get men and women safely into space and back, we can find non-animal alternatives to live animal experiments. We are mastering the mysteries of space. We have devised some gruesome weapons of destruction that are able to land death accurately thousands of miles away from the launching base. We can make deserts bloom. We have built such machines as will travel underwater around our globe without surfacing. However, we are only at the comparatively early stages of finding, without putting millions of animals to death each year, cures and treatments needed for the health of man.

The Government say that the number of experiments has fallen and that is true, depending on where the measurement is taken from. There are now more experiments on animals than there were in 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957. In 1957 about 2·5 million experiments on animals took place. Last year there were about 3·5 million experiments.

What offends many people is that the Bill does not instantly propose to do away with tests such as the Draize eye test, the LD50 test, testing for beauty cosmetic purposes or warfare experiments. A combination of project licences, individual licences and the work of the animal procedures committee could mean that such procedures are ended and that every individual licence is scrutinised for the purpose of the experiment which it proposes, but we need to know about the timescale. By how much are the Government committed to achieve these and other objectives so that there is a steady and continuing reduction in the number of experiments and the number of animals involved?

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): I take interest in the subject because I have done limited research, but I cannot discover any action by the Labour party, when it had the opportunity in power between 1964 and 1970 and from 1974 to 1979. What did the Labour Governments do?

Mr. Corbett: I say with a straight face that I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman seeks to make a party political point. I sought to put on record no more than the truth. On 23 March 1979—a Thursday—the then Labour Prime Minister announced from the Dispatch Box Government plans to set up a Royal Commission on animal welfare. The issue was debated the following Friday, but certain other events occurred rapidly which made it impossible for the then Government and Prime Minister to do anything. It does not help to throw bricks through windows. We all stand guilty of not doing enough for animal welfare. I do not want to prolong the argument, but the Conservative party is late into this business.

The Bill does not mention the Government's willingness or determination to secure a continuing fall in the number of experiments and their replacement by non-animal testing techniques.

Many of the major pharmaceutical firms have developed cell and tissue culture techniques as alternatives to the use of animals. That has been reflected in a fall in the number of animals used for experimentation since 1976. However, that has gone neither far nor fast enough because the numbers are still above what they were 32 years ago.

Between 1952 and 1976 there were 109·9 million experiments with live animals. Between 1977 and 1983 there were 32·4 million experiments on animals. In 1984 the figure was 3·5 million. That is a total of 145·8 million experiments. The wonder is that we still know so little.

My heart tells me that there should be a quick end to all experiments on live animals; my head tells me that that is probably some way off. There is a moral and an ethical problem from which the House cannot run away. For example, what do we do about the ten most common forms of cancer or about the curse of multiple sclerosis which strikes with such devastation at an increasingly young age? What do we do about the growing social problem of senile dementia, said to be the single most pressing socio-medical problem of the century as we live longer? It is estimated that about 700,000 elderly people are already afflicted and that unless a treatment is found the numbers will rise with the increased percentage of elderly in our population.

I have a friend who has just marked — he says celebrated — his 30th year of paralysis from the neck down. He contracted polio at 16 years of age. That disease has now been beaten—though too late for him. His life is a remarkable and humbling example of what the human spirit can cope with.

Measles, diphtheria, mumps and whooping cough are now all treatable and curable—mainly at the price of animal experiments. The breakthrough of antibiotics such as penicillin has enabled us to fight infectious diseases. Smallpox has been eradicated worldwide. However, we still lack treatments for the most common forms of cancer, heart disease, rheumatism, arthritis, asthma and AIDS. Not only humans have benefited from this research. Research on animals has advanced veterinary practice, for example among dogs and cats. The figures about the abuse of such so-called pet animals published by the RSPCA today gives none of us any cause for pride in our claim that we are a nation of animal lovers.

The ParliamentaryUnder-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): Perhaps it is timely for the House to consider that the total number of cats and dogs used in experiments in laboratories last year was 20,000 and that the total number of such animals put down by the RSPCA was over 100,000. That is an indictment of our abuse of animals.

Mr. Corbett: I agree.

Why is the Bill not called the "Laboratory Animals Bill" or "Laboratory Animals Protection Bill"? The 1876 Act had a title which reflected the fact that experiments involved cruelty. I hope that hon. Members on all sides will support changing the Bill's title. The two Bills considered by another place had that different title.

The powers of the Animal Procedures Committee should be increased. As the Home Secretary made clear, that committee's role is critical if the Bill is to be successful. The committee should be able to initiate action without the Home Secretary's approval if it is to have a properly independent role. I understand if the Government are afraid to give the committee a blank cheque — although they seem to be spending money like a drunk on a Saturday night—but that problem can be solved in the Bill.

The Save British Science campaign warned us last month about the dangerous cuts in investment for scientists and research. It said that the economic and social effects on the United Kingdom may not become obvious for a few more years and added:

"However, we should warn the Government that when they do they are likely to be grave and effectively irreversible".

That was the verdict of the advisory board in June 1985. Last month that was backed by those involved in the campaign, including 49 fellows of the Royal Society and eight Nobel laureates—no mean bunch.

The important point is that such cuts in research mean, inevitably, that there will be fewer scientists helping in the work of finding alternative non-animal tests. That point needs both making and understanding.

We want the committee to have a duty laid upon it to monitor regularly what is happening, especially in tests that involve the most severe category of pain. The judgment or likely degrees of pain involved in any experiment are difficult to access, but that underlines the need for an obligation to be placed on the committee to keep that category under constant review. To that extent —I do not say this in any carping sense — both the committee and the Home Secretary can learn from experience and from the mistakes made in the granting of project licences.

We shall look to the committee, having a specific duty to avoid the unnecessary use of animals in experiments, to try to secure a reduction in animal usage. I accept that that is implied in the Bill, but it should be clearly stated —if for no other reason than that it would be in keeping with the European convention, which states in its preamble:

"resolve to limit the use of animals for experimental and other scientific purposes with the aim of replacing such use wherever practicable."

It is important that the committee sees all project licences that involve pain at its most severe assessed degree. I have no wish to add to bureaucracy, but such a procedure woud be a powerful deterrent to applications where there has not been proper consideration of a project design that brings it into a lower category of severity.

Clause 26(3) places a three-year bar on prosecutions for offences, and we shall want to consider that. There is often a time lag between the conducting of experiments and the reports of them being received, accepted, and actually published by learned journals. I have details of one experiment, with which I shall not weary the House, involving 40 monkeys. It was carried out in 1976 or even earlier, but the details were not published until 1979. In another test, involving monkeys, a report of the experiment was submitted in January 1983 and, accepted in May 1984, but the tests took place about 1980-81. Of course I understand that Home Office inspectors were likely to be involved earlier than that, but no one could claim that they are infallible. We should consider a longer period for possible prosecutions, perhaps five or six years, to take account of that point.

[Mr. Corbett]

Clause 22(3) raises the issue of secrecy and members of the committee. I think that the Bill has that the wrong way round. It puts the onus on members of the committee to prove that they acted responsibly, rather than on the prosecution to prove recklessness. That cannot be right and we shall want to consider that.

We shall also want some assurance that the representation of interests on the committee is properly balanced. We shall want to ensure that the balance does not move too much one way or the other over a period. That has happened with the Farm Animal Welfare Council, although I do not expect the Home Secretary or the Minister to be aware of that. There has been great concern about the way in which the balance of representation on that council has altered over a number of years. We want to ensure that the legitimate animal welfare viewpoint is strong and not diminished over the years.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he can give us an assurance about the inspectorate. We welcome the proposal to appoint six new Home Office inspectors, but that solves only part of the problem. We must be sure that both in the Home Office and in the inspectors' offices there is adequate support staff to ensure that the proposed procedures work with the minimum of delay. We need further assurance, although we have some already, that the inspectorate will, when it feels the need, have advice from independent experts.

There are other detailed points, but we shall deal with them in Committee. However, I want to underline that we lay great stress on the powers and the independence of the committee, which is critical to the proposed new structure for better control of live animal experiments.

What we must all understand, if we do not already, is that research is never predictable. I am told that about nine out of every 10 experiments do not yield the expected results—not that they are wasted, because even if they lead in an unexpected direction, they increase man's knowledge of himself and how we work. We have an appalling legacy of unconquered disease. Some eight of the most common forms of cancer are caused by our lifestyle and environment. That suggests that we would be well rewarded of we put additional cash into the preventive aspect of the National Health Service so that more is done to stop people becoming ill. It is no new thought, but investment is wholly inadequate.

The United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research has told us of the great advances during the past 25 years. Children with leukaemia can now, more often than not, look forward to full and normal lives. Several other cancers have become curable. Prevention of cancer, especially lung cancer, is now possible for thousands of individuals. We know too that, caught early enough, the lives of hundreds of women can be saved each year if they are screened for cervical cancer and treated early enough.

There will be quite speedy changes in the number and nature of experiments as alternative techniques are developed—partly under pressure from the Bill and partly because, as the oil runs out, many of the oil-based products we appear to find essential to our daily lives will be relegated to scientific museums. I hope that that will add to pressure to find more natural alternatives.

I want to advise my right hon. and hon. Friends to give the Bill a critical welcome. We want it to be improved in major ways because we want to ensure that we take this rare, long-awaited opportunity to turn it into a vehicle for real reform of live animal experiments—achieving a steady reduction in the number and range of experiments.

Nothing that we do with this Bill should remove the sense of humility that we should feel about experiments on live animals. As Clive Hollands said, we need to

"accord to animals the dignity which is their due."

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Many right hon and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. I think that the House would greatly appreciate brief speeches.

8.39 pm

Mrs. Sally Oppenheim (Gloucester): I must begin with both a declaration of interest and a confession. I am on the main board of Boots, a company engaged in the research and development of new drugs. I confess that I am one of those who are deeply affected when confronted by animal suffering. I would not go so far as to say more deeply affected than when confronted by human suffering, but it is often a struggle. I care passionately about the welfare of animals and I confess that, in relation to this Bill and to animals, I am biased. I make that confession at the outset in order, I hope, to put the rest of my remarks into perspective.

I wholeheartedly welcome the Bill, which represents a fair and reasonable attempt to balance public concern about the welfare of animals with the need to continue to achieve medical advances which benefit the lives and health of both man and animals. In particular, I welcome the Bill's objective of bringing about a reduction in the numbers of animals used in experiments and the modification of experimental techniques, especially in relation to specific pain and suffering.

Not everyone will find the Bill perfect in every respect, and I am sure that some further amendments will prove necessary, but most hon. Members—indeed, I believe all—will welcome a measure which is long overdue. There have been 13 unsuccessful attempts under successive Governments to reform the 1876 and 1911 legislation, all of which have failed. The measure is long overdue and is likely to be controversial, but it is essentially a humane measure. Therefore, the Bill must command the support of the House and all caring people.

I join the congratulations to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary on the extent of consultation upon which he has embarked and the degree to which he has succeeded with the legislation in satisfying a broad spectrum of people on all sides of the argument. Of course he has not satisfied the lunatic fringe militant movement. They are wicked people, more interested in politics than in animals. I wonder how many of them would withhold insulin from their diabetic children or refuse open heart surgery to their infant born with heart disease. I wonder why they fail to make it clear in their copious literature that a great many non-experimental tests on animals must take place because of the statutory requirement to batch-test many drugs already on the market for public protection, and that that, too, applies to a number of pesticides. They are disruptive and destructive people. They confuse the issue. They

cause suffering to countless animals by their irresponsible behaviour and, above all, they do not represent sincere animal lovers in Britain.

However, on the other side of that fringe—a few of them, I admit, are only just on the other side of that fringe—are sincere people. Millions of people not represented by the militants care genuinely about animal welfare, among them hundreds of my constituents who welcome the Bill as an important measure of reform.

In the Bill the scope of control is greater; the justification criteria are sharpened; the licensing system is greatly tightened; and an attempt is made to define limits and to grade severity of pain. New registration requirements are introduced, as are new provisions about the re-use of animals, in particular relating to animals which have been anaesthetised. Inspectors are to have greater powers, and, importantly, the animal procedures committee is to be created. Offences against the Act will be dealt with far more severely than ever before.

Those are all welcome, progressive measures. They are genuine reforms. But I hope it will not be another 50 years or so before the safeguards in the Bill are added to if the Animal Procedures Committee or other evidence shows that to be necessary.

One criterion of a civilised society is the way in which it treats its animals. It is a criterion which is bound to lead to mixed emotions. On the one hand, there is the undoubted suffering which animals endure during some, but not all experiments, which are stomach-churning and deeply distressing even to read about. On the other, there is the agony suffered by arthritis victims, the grief of a family when a father is struck dead by heart disease, the millions of people killed by cancer, and, against that, the hope and joy that a cure would bring the world over.

Experimentation is about hope and results. Terrible diseases have been eliminated, as my right hon. Friend has shown—diseases which claimed lives as recently as 50 years ago. Animals have been among the main beneficiaries. Diseases have been wiped out and a great deal of suffering by animals has been saved. Almost every time one takes one's pets to the vet, they are likely to benefit from experimentation which has already taken place.

Surgical techniques, microsurgery and anaesthesia have all greatly improved as a result of animal experimentation, and thousands of men, women and children have benefited and regained a better quality of life. All the well-known drugs and vaccines, which are too numerous to go into, such as the antibiotics, could not have been discovered without animal experimentation, as well as the less often quoted treatments for Third-world diseases, such as leprosy. The Bill faces the daunting task of establishing the important new principle that benefits from any experiments to mankind have to be weighed against the suffering that will be caused to animals and that, wherever possible—and it is becoming increasingly possible—alternative sources must be sought. We must not allow experiments that are unnecessarily painful or the use of unnecessarily large numbers of animals. I do not for a moment suppose that the Bill will provide a perfect solution to any of those problems.

I am still concerned about the interpretation and determination of permitted pain thresholds, and — something that has not been mentioned before — fear among animals. Animal instincts are strong, and fear is the most easily fed. Wherever the experiment permits, tranquillisers and pain killers should be used to minimise both, although it should be stressed that by no means all experiments, even major ones, involve either pain or distress, as I have witnessed in our own laboratories. There, devoted technicians who are animal lovers keep animals that they are testing as pets in their homes and the animals only visit the laboratory about once a month. Progressively fewer animals every year are being used in experiments there.

Then there is the vexed question of experimentation for non-essentials, such as cosmetics, which include, as has been said, many everday toiletries such as toothpaste and baby-care items. They remain untouched by the Bill. Certainly nobody wants toxic substances to be sold in any of those categories. Everyone wants consumers to be protected. But at what price in animal suffering do we gain a new pink, blue or green stripe in our toothpaste? I hasten to add, before I am deluged by letters from toothpaste manufacturers, that that may be an entirely inappropriate example. It is inappropriate, but it demonstrates the point graphically, and eventually a justification test may be required in that general area.

The LD50 test rightly arouses deep emotions. I agree that its monitoring is important, as is its restriction. But, regrettably, it is essential that that experimentation should continue in order to enable safe maximum doses to be set — for example, where the difference between a lethal and a therapeutic dose for a cancer patient may be very small indeed.

The "me-too" drugs also came under fire in another place, but, there again, new versions of existing medicines are often desirable as they represent improvements and become available to patients who may be resistant or allergic to existing drugs. Allergies cannot be dismissed lightly because, not infrequently, there are life and death implications for some patients and severe effects for others.

No legislation can make animal experimentation agreeable. Man's biblical domain over animals can be morally maintained only by the exercise of humanity towards them. The Bill represents a courageous step to limit animal suffering, ducked by successive Governments in the past both in this country and in the United States. It should be welcomed wholeheartedly by all who care about animal and human welfare.

8.49 pm

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): I should like to echo the sentiments already expressed by all the hon. Members who have spoken about the benefits that can accrue to animals from experiments. The alliance does not advocate a total prohibition on animal experiments. We want the minimum number to be carried out. We recognise that the health of animals has improved, and we hope will continue to improve, because of these experiments.

The alliance does not support extra-parliamentary and illegal action taken by extremist elements. They damage the cause of animal welfare and take much public support away from the strong lobby for animal rights. But it would be a mistake to say that the Bill is universally welcomed and will do as Clive Hollands, to whom the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) referred, said and improve the welfare of and care given to animals.

If we genuinely believe that our fellow creatures on this planet have an equal right to dignity and to enjoy their life span—for many it is short—we must all work towards

[Mr. Michael Hancock]

an end to all forms of experimentation. That is why the welcome to the Bill is not as warm in some quarters as it might have been if there had been a greater ambition to arrive more quickly at that end result.

We must all surely welcome the fact, that, for the first time in more than 100 years, the Government are at least attempting to update the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. The current proposal, which is hailed as a giant step forward for laboratory animals and is used for propaganda purposes by the so-called animal activists does little to protect laboratory animals, to reduce animal experimentation or to promote alternative methods of experimentation. The Bill does not go nearly as far as it should and must.

The Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry, which is the drug industry's trade association, has welcomed the proposals. Do hon. Members think that the association believes that the Bill will have an effect on the almost 2 million experiments, or 55 per cent. of all experiments that will be performed in 1987? Of course not. The association predicts that it will perform yet another 2 million experiments in 1987. The executive director of the Research Defence Society — a pro-vivisectionist organisation — has said that he cannot think of a single experiment allowed now that will not be allowed in the future. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people hoped that the Bill would go at least some way towards outlawing these experiments — the Draize test and the LD50 test — about which hon. Members know only too well. The drug companies and the pro-vivisectionist lobby admit that the experiments will not be stopped.

It has been argued that, for the first time, the Secretary of State will be given more power to control animal experimentation, but that is not true. Section 8 of the 1876 Act gives the Home Secretary discretion to refuse and revoke licences to which he may attach any conditions that he believes expedite the objectives of the Act. Furthermore, under section 21 the Secretary of State may disallow or suspend any certificates granted under the Act. The Secretary of State already as considerable powers which are in practice rarely, if even used. The Bill creates more red tape and encourages the fear that licences and projects put to the Department will be given an automatic rubber stamp.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Will the hon. Gentleman reflect on the fact that the new powers given to the Secretary of State mean that it will not be the drug companies that will decide whether an experiment should be continued? For the first time, hon. Members will be given the responsibility to check on experiments. The hon. Gentleman has referred to outside organisations. One may respect their views, but they by no means have the final say.

Mr. Hannock: That is all well and good, if we can be assured that there will be adequate staff to police the Bill's provisions. The fear which many people share is that there will not be sufficient resources to enable that policing to take place. More than 3 million experiments are performed annually, most of which are paid for out of public money and claimed to be performed for the public benefit. The 1876 Act and this legislation provide no mechanism for public accountability. No one outside Whitehall and the scientific establishments has any real say in the permitted experiments.

Mr. Corbett: What does the alliance say?

Mr. Hancock: It is abrasive for the hon. Member for Erdington, who rebuked an hon. Member for trying to introduce a political trend in his speech, to make from a sedentary position comments which are extremely distasteful.

The Government have told us that the Bill has been loosely worded to allow for flexibility through the years, but the Home Office guidelines, which are meant to explain this bill mean that that flexibility swings like a pendulum. It can swing one way or the other and, in the end, laboratory animals could be in a worse plight. The guidelines might be set out to appease public opinion, but they have no legal standing. They are not explicitly admissible as evidence and can be changed without Parliament's consent.

The Bill is dedicated to the idea of flexibility, which does not seem to me to be an unquestionable virtue. Flexibility means that one can bend. If one is entirely flexible, one can bend both ways. A Bill that is almost empty without any prohibitions in it and that does not say, "You cannot do this to an animal," must be open to all sorts of abuses and unwelcome practices.

In particular, we must trust the human nature of the politicians, including the various Home Secretaries now and in the future who will implement the legislation, and of the people whose livelihoods and professional ambitions are concerned with experimentation. It is difficult to see where the Bill will put the necessary brake or check on this practice. The guidelines have no legal standing. They can be changed without the necessity for direct consultation with the House. They are open to questioning.

Many hon. Members will undoubtedly speak out against the various clauses, suggesting that some are vague or must be amended in Committee. Clause 5 provides for the Secretary of State to issue project licences. Clause 5(3)*(d)* refers to

"the advancement of knowledge in biological or behavioural sciences"—

a vast and unrestricted category, which allows for any type of experimentation. Clearly, the Government intended this, because it states:

"In devising new controls it is very important not to put industry at unnecessary risk".

One can only believe, therefore, that the issuing of project licences will not be restrictive. One of the factors that must be seriously considered in granting a project licence would be whether the viability of a particular project or company would be put at risk if a licence was not granted.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Am I right in saying that the hon. Gentleman would like to see heart disease and cancer conquered, in addition to a continuation in the advances which have been made in conquering other diseases? Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he believes that it is possible without animal experimentation to conquer such diseases and continue to improve what we have already achieved?

Mr. Hancock: I speak with some personal experience on that point. I had the misfortune to be given a son who was born with a congenital heart disease, and for the past nine years we have battled with the problems that that

entails for a young lad growing up. Of course I want see improvements to the health of every human being and to every creature on our planet. I said at the beginning that I do not see that the alliance's standpoint is anything but a constructive and realistic approach to animals being used in experimentation. Far be it for any hon. Member to suggest that it was an opportunist stance to take. I have been actively involved in animal welfare campaigns for the past 20 years. Certainly, most of my adult life has been dedicated to that end. Of course I want to see experiments and the health of everyone improved.

I refer hon. Members to the points raised about the duplication of experiments where animals are subjected to breathing in tobacco fumes day in and day out and are then killed so that their lungs can be examined simply to prove a point which is already well known to everyone, that high tar and low tar cigarettes have various degrees of resultant illness on the lungs of creatures that inhale them. There are many problems there. Duplication of experiments and projects has to be looked at properly and must be policed properly and effectively.

Subsection 4 causes some concern. It gives the Secretary of State the right to

"weigh the likely adverse effects on the animals concerned against the benefit likely to accrue".

Who defines "benefit" and "adverse effects"? Is a benefit a new headache drug to be added to the many already on the market? Is it right that we should continue to experiment on animals just to bring yet another product on to the market when there are shelves full of products dealing with the same symptoms? I do not believe that that is right and I do not believe that the people of the country, when they sought advice and help on this matter, expected the Government to produce something which would allow that duplication to continue.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is making an extraordinary speech for a party headed by a medical practitioner. At least the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) is not here to hear what is being said in his name. Is it alliance policy that if it formed a Government, any company which wished to develop a new product would have to have express Government permission before it would be permitted to employ people to do that?

Mr. Hancock: The Minister is being slightly absurd. One would hope that an alliance Government would put fairly high on its list of priorities an animal welfare Bill that would encompass the many things which need to be done at present. I am sure that if my right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) were here he would say just that and that we would be concerned to implement legislation taking account of the needs of all creatures on our planet and not putting people at risk.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North) *rose——*

Mr. Hancock: I should like to develop the argument a little further.

I am sure that many hon. Members have read clause 19 and are concerned about it. It establishes an Animal Procedures Committee and specifies its composition. The composition of that committee needs close examination. It is important that it reflects animal as well as scientific interests and those of other people.

It is important that the Bill offers real appreciation of people's concern for animal welfare. It needs firm and strict policing. I hope that the Bill will be amended in Committee to give it that strengthening before it comes back to the House. The Government must have the willingness and the backbone forcibly to implement their own proposals. I hope that tests such as the Draize test and the LD50 test will be changed in Committee, and outlawed by the time the Bill comes back to the House. I hope that the Bill will be amended so that those diabolical practices are banned.

Mr. Gale: In reply to the hon. Member for East Kilbride, (Dr. Miller) the hon. Gentleman said that he was not being opportunistic. He then went on to refer to the LD50 test. With respect, he owes it to the House and probably to his constituents in Portsmouth, South, to explain how, tonight, he is putting his name to an alliance amendment, which is pusillanimous in the extreme, whereas last week he signed an early-day motion, which covered many of the points about the LD50 that he is now raising, and not long before that he wrote to the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, which supports the Bill, saying that he considered it an honour to be associated with the organisation, and it had his whole-hearted commitment.

Mr. Hancock: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that. Unfortunately the fund failed to live up to the expectations of its associated members. It did not have what it takes to push the issue further. When the fund wrote to me and explained its concern about the various forms of animal welfare, it appeared that its heart was in the right place, but when the chips were down it failed to come up with the commitment that I thought would be there and worthy of it.

Mr. Cohen: Could it be that FRAME failed to live up to expectations in pressing the need for tighter control over animal experiments because it is dependent on a Government grant to keep it going? That might be why it toed the Government's line.

Mr. Hancock: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for drawing that point to our attention.

I should like to refer to our amendment on the Order Paper. I am disappointed, as are my colleagues, that you did not select it, Mr. Speaker. Nevertheless, we live with that decision. Our amendment tells the House that we have a commitment and are not happy with the way in which the Bill is constructed. We have a more enlightened and ambitious approach to animal welfare. We wanted the House not to give the Bill a Second Reading in the hope that the Government would reconsider their position.

The Bill is unacceptable in its present form. We sought to move an amendment, but unfortunately we were not successful. However, we hope to amend and improve the Bill in Committee. When it comes back to the House, I hope that it will encompass more of the points which, I am sure, most hon. Members and people outside want to see in it. It is no good crying crocodile tears in this place over animal experimentation and suggesting that one has sympathy for animals if, at the end of the day, one does not put one's vote where it matters.

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman is not winning himself many friends tonight. For three years several hon. Members on both sides of the House, people from the British Veterinary Association and a range of animal welfare groups have worked together to bring forward a

[Mr. Mellor]

measure that can command the support of a wide range of people. The hon. Gentleman is making the lowest common denominator of empty rhetoric with no constructive policy proposals and in a sense damning the project without giving any evidence of a single hour of constructive thought. Does he think that he has done himself much credit by that?

Mr. Hancock: The Under-Secretary is entitled to that opinion, but I have tried to say that there has to be another opinion, that the Bill does not go far enough. I fully accept that hon. Members, people outside the House, and the other place have worked valiantly trying to put the issue before Parliament. We have heard tonight that we all stand guilty for the part that we did or did not play in trying to change the legislation of the past hundred years. Then when we come to present the House and the country with a chance to change what has happened for more than 100 years, we should go as far as possible without compromising the principles that we have explained time and time again, and so assure the constituents who write to us on these issues.

The importance of animal welfare is linked to animal dignity and whether or not experiments should be allowed to continue at their present level. I have said time and again that it is not fair that the number of experiments should continue at their present level and there must be changes. I had hoped that the House would have the courage to go further than the Government want to go under the Bill.

9.11 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): The hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) spoke from the Opposition Front Bench with great sincerity, and I agree with many of his points. With due respect, he showed great responsibility, as did the official Opposition, in allowing the Bill to go though without challenge, while——

Mr. Cohen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Dudley Smith: I have only just started.

Mr. Cohen: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I have your instruction or advice, Mr. Speaker, on whether hon. Members who speak in this debate should declare an interest?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has only just risen and has been speaking for only about 30 seconds.

Sir Dudley Smith: I have neglected so far to declare my interest, but I intend to do that in a moment.

Before I was interrupted, I was saying that the hon. Member for Erdington was correct to reserve his fire for the Committee stage. He was generally right to give the Bill a fair wind.

How the hon. Gentleman's speech contrasted with the speech that we have just heard from the so-called alliance, from the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock). If ever there was a man for all seasons we heard him speak tonight. We heard the hon. Gentleman out grubbing for votes with the kind of comments which we have come to expect from the so-called alliance. They will do anything and move in any direction if they can discredit both the Government and the official Opposition. I shall say no more about the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South, as his speech speaks for itself. The hon. Gentleman ought to be ashamed of himself.

Several hon. Members have said that they believe that a country's attitude towards society is revealed in the way that it treats its animals. Indeed, the concern that hon. Members show in the right context is the hallmark of an advanced society. That is why I welcome this long-overdue Bill as it puts us in advance of most other nations. It reforms and improves the present situation in relation to authorised experiments with animals.

I wish to declare an interest and I hope that that will satify the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen). For much of my professional life I have been connected with the pharmaceutical, toiletries and cosmetics industries and I continue to be so involved. In the past, when I was not a Member of the House, I worked full-time in those industries, so I speak tonight as one with allegedly some expert knowledge on this subject. I will endeavour to put that knowledge forward for the general good when we reach Standing Committee, if I am fortunate enough to be selected as a Committee member.

The most important point to bring out, which was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department, is that the Bill introduces the requirement for all experiments to be assessed before they are carried out. It gives power to the Secretary of State, backed by the expert committee which we have been discussing, to refuse to allow animals to be used in any experiment which is not really necessary. That is the key requirement of the Bill, and it spells out a considerable advance on the former position.

Of course, unless one opposes virtually all animal experimentation, one must accept that this legislation is a significant step forward. Those who oppose the Bill outright or oppose it very strongly are entitled to their views and to express them in a free society. However, I cannot understand their opposition. I do not believe that they have thought through the consequences for their fellow men if they succeed in banning all or the vast majority of animal experiments.

We must approach the subject realistically and unemotionally. Much nonsense is talked about animal experimentation — we have already heard some of it tonight. Much of it is irrational and emotionally generated. No normal person enjoys using animals for medical, scientific or essential testing purposes. Companies certainly do not — to put it at its lowest, they find it expensive — but until effective alternatives are discovered, it is the only way in which they can proceed. One hopes that the gradual reduction that is already taking place will continue and perhaps gather pace under this legislation.

I find animal experimentation distasteful and I dislike seeing it, as I have on many occasions. But I fully recognise its necessity. The clinicians and laboratory assistants whom I have seen using animals have been caring, dedicated people who are fond of animals. They are not the cold-blooded, evil, Frankenstein-type experimenters that are portrayed by the extremists.

Many of us in the Chamber tonight would not have been here but for experiments that were conducted in the past to produce life-saving medicines. Strong opponents of animal experimentation, such as the hon. Members for Leyton and for Portsmouth, South should ask themselves this question: would I allow myself, if dangerously ill, to

be treated with medicines that have evolved from animal experiments or were tested for toxicity on animals? Perhaps even more important, would I allow my children to receive such medicines to save their lives? There is no room for hypocrisy in such matters, but we hear a great deal of hypocrisy from some people. It is sometimes conveniently forgotten by the opponents of the legislation that general animal welfare in Britain has improved remarkably as a result of the procedures that are dealt with in the Bill. New vaccines and treatments for animal illness have been discovered and, as a result of experiments on animals, we have fitter, happier and healthier farm animals, bloodstock and domestic pets.

I welcome the fact that sensible and co-operative views on the legislation have been taken by the more moderate and responsible animal protection movements, especially the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, or FRAME. Like them, I have queries about several details which could be debated in Committee, and I and my hon. Friends will need assurances in some instances. However, I am delighted that the Government have introduced such a comprehensive measure.

As one of Parliament's delegates to the Council of Europe, I played a part in formulating and encouraging the Council's convention on the subject. Several hon. Members on that delegation, notably the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), played their part too in formulating the Council of Europe's proposals. As my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, the convention, which is about to be signed, sets the pattern for Europe. But the Bill goes much further. It is stricter and more comprehensive than the Council of Europe convention. If the Bill becomes law, our new practices will put us in the forefront as an example to our European neighbours. That is as it should be.

I am especially pleased that the Bill extends to the breeding and supply of animals and their care outside the period of experiment. During the years, procedures in that respect have improved considerably, but we all have a horror of domestic pets being stolen by Bill Sikes characters, who sell them illegally to laboratories. That rarely happens now, but that is why I asked my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary whether, in the future, all such animals must be specially bred for the purpose.

The proposed Animal Procedures Committee will be given wide advisory powers. We shall have to be satisfied that that committee is properly staffed and composed of energetic, sensible people who have animal welfare at heart.

I want to see the inspectorate increased and I shall certainly push for that. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department will say something about the inspectorate and the possibility of an increase on the current proposals.

The case for proper, well-supervised pharmaceutical experimentation is overwhelming. To stop it or to restrict it too severely would be a dangerous blow against medical progress and the fight against disease. There are many who accept the need for medical tests but who strongly oppose experimentation for toiletries and cosmetics. This was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim). Animal experiments in respect of cosmetics and toiletries are, as the Home Secretary stressed in his speech, tiny when compared with medical experiments. Of the cosmetic tests which are carried out, 75 per cent. use human volunteers. The use of data banks and in vitro alternatives also contribute to a reduction in the use of animals. They are used only when there is no alternative.

There is a wide discrepancy between the use of the word cosmetic, which is in common parlance, and the description of the word for regulatory purposes. The common factor defined in cosmetic products is that they are applied to the external parts of the body and inside the mouth and they thus include products such as soap, toothpaste, shaving cream and shampoo. As has been mentioned, we have laws which insist that these products are properly tested. Manufacturers have a legal and moral obligation to ensure their products' safety. Manufacturers that did not ensure such safety would soon be sued out of business. All manufacturers have to meet the laws passed in this House, and, like it or not, laws brought about by EEC regulations which are for the protection of the individual.

This legislation calls for every licence application for cosmetic testing to be automatically scrutinised by the Animal Procedures Committee. I strongly support that new move. It will be effective in cutting out those types of test which are non-essential. There must be some which are non-essential and it is our duty to see that they are eliminated.

Present-day medicine would come to an end without the use of animals in medical research. One day I hope we shall find effective alternative procedures. Meanwhile research leading to advances against such dread diseases as cancer, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, leukaemia and arthritis must continue. I think that any right-thinking person would agree. We are introducing supervisory legislation, and such legislation must strike a balance between the need for human and veterinary medical progress and the genuine care and welfare of laboratory animals. I believe that this Bill makes an honest attempt to do this and that ultimately it will succeed.

9.23 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I shall oppose this inadequate Bill tonight. As the House will be aware, I put down early-day motion 411, and a Second Reading amendment to the Bill in the same terms as the early-day motion, which was signed by more than 30 Members on this side of the House. The amendment has not been selected but the provisions of the early-day motion would be vastly preferable to the Bill.

I also produced the Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill, which I presented under the ten-minute Bill procedure. It is a detailed Bill, which embodies the proposals in my early-day motion as well as tightening up the law on experimentation. It is vastly superior to the Bill that the Government have produced.

The early-day motion condemned unnecessary experiments, but that idea has been lost in this debate. Many unnecessary animal experiments go ahead and they should be stopped. There should be a ban on animals for purposes connected with cosmetics, tobacco and alcohol. There should be a ban on the Draize eye irritancy test, where irritants are administered, without pain relief, until the animals eyes burst. There should be a ban on LD50 poisoning tests, where the animals are painfully poisoned until 50 per cent. die; a ban on behavioural and psychological tests, where the animals are driven mad; and a ban on warfare experiments, where the animals are deliberately shot, irradiated or subjected to germ and

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chemical warfare experiments. Officially, according to Labour and Conservative Governments, we are not supposed to be into germ or chemical warfare, but it is all right to have warfare experiments on animals.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): The hon. Gentleman has given a long and impressive catalogue of bans. Will he include the ritual slaughter of animals for religious reasons?

Mr. Cohen: I can happily talk about that. I should prefer to see the pre-stunning of animals. I do not think that legislation is the right way to achieve that. It is best done through consultation with religious leaders. It is an important point. The religious arguments are about which method is the most cruel. The imams and rabbis think that pre-stunning is more cruel than their methods.

My Bill would ban those experiments immediately and reinstate the independent committee on animal experiments, which would exclude vested interests.

Those points clearly show the inadequacy of the Government's Bill, which does not end any of those tests. The claim is made that the Bill regulates experiments. That was the basis of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, which is now deemed to be out of date. That Act, like the Bill, acquiesced in a whole range of animal experiments. The Bill refers to the protection of animals, but the regulations seem designed to protect the experimenter rather than the animal. There is no commitment to phase out, to ensure the reduction of or to promote alternatives to the tests in the Bill.

A spokesperson for the Research Defence Society—a pro-vivisection group funded by the drug and cosmetic multinationals—said of the Bill:

"I cannot think of a single experiment allowed now that will not be allowed in the future".

The time is right for some prohibition, not for more of the same rubber-stamping regulations. We should prohibit the unnecessary experiments and practices listed in my amendment, in my early-day motion and in the Cruelty to Animals (Amendment) Bill.

My Bill dealt also with cruel blood sports, as did the one presented last week by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. Mcnamara). There is no mention of cruel blood sports in the Government's Bill. They have no intention of introducing such legislation, for fear of upsetting their squirearchy. That is despite the fact that the polls, even among Conservative voters, are overwhelmingly in favour of abolishing blood sports. The Northern Ireland Assembly has twice voted unanimously to abolish hare coursing. The Government have overruled that decision and have not included it in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Member will not canvass too strongly his private Member's Bill. This is a rather different measure.

Mr. Cohen: I agree, Mr. Speaker, but my Bill can be compared directly with the Government's Bill, and mine is vastly superior. A Bill which purports to deal with animal welfare should also deal with cruel sports. There have been two unanimous votes in the Northern Ireland Assembly on hare coursing, which have been overruled by the Government. Those who support fox and stag hunting are a bunch of sadists who enjoy the fun of the kill while devastating our countryside. As for animal fighting, especially dog fighting, it is outrageous—

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is rather wide of the Bill, which is about animal experiments.

Mr. Cohen: We are dealing with the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. If you do not think that dog fighting, hare coursing, and fox and stag hunting are cruel, Mr. Speaker, you are in a different world from me. In regard to animal fighting, it is outrageous that the law has not been tightened up. My Bill would tighten the law and increase penalties for organisers and those who attend. It would also ban the import, sale or advertisement of fighting dogs. How much longer will the Government ignore the British public's wish for such action against barbaric animal fighting? That is all I wanted to say about cruel sports, but it needed saying.

The Bill is restricted to experiments. The Government do not call them experiments—they are a bit squeamish about that. Perhaps that is why my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) wanted to retitle the bill, although he decided that he did not want to call them experiments either. The Government have spoken only on scientific procedures, to ensure that public sensitivities are not offended, but they have pushed the Bill through as quickly and as quietly as they can. They started in another place to avoid proper public understanding of the issues and a subsequent reponse.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that using the words "scientific procedures" widens the Bill's scope? The word "experiment" is much more difficult to define. My hon. Friend has it the wrong way around.

Mr. Cohen: I am interested in what my hon. Friend has said, and I shall take it into account. We should face the fact, however, that the public understand this as animal experimentation, and we should address our comments to what the public understand.

There are other examples of the double talk behind the Bill. I have here the letter which the Minister of State sent to all hon. Members in December 1985. We should consider it. He wrote:

"the Government has published a Bill to provide greater protection for animals used in scientific procedures."

It does no such thing. As has been said, the Bill will stop no experiments that are currently done.

The letter continues:

"We must all look forward to the day when animal experiments are not necessary."

How pious.

If that is the Minister's intention, why is he doing so little to promote non-animal alternatives for experiments? The Government are providing £200,000 over three years. I described that amount as tokenist. I was wrong—it is derisory. The Minister's letter speaks of "the highest possible standards". Those are fine words, but the Home Office advisory committee is packed with people such as Dr. Coid, who was responsible for designing the primate cages which featured so infamously in the recent prosecution of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. Dr. Coid is still on the advisory committee, so where are the Minister's highest possible standards?

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): Will my hon. Friend accept that in that case the court found both the doctor and the veterinary surgeon not guilty? To use that example under the privilege of Parliament is to abuse this place.

Mr. Cohen: I do not agree with my hon. Friend. That doctor was found guilty at the first court hearing. The case continues. There is documented proof about the state of those cages. That person should not be on any Home Office advisory committee.

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If, as my hon. Friend suggests, the matter is still going forward, I trust that you will rule that it is sub judice.

Mr. Speaker: When we are dealing with legislation, as we are now, it is in order to mention matters of this kind.

Mr. Cohen: We are talking about the composition of the Home Office advisory committee. It is packed with licensed experimenters, proven vivisectionists and individuals with vested interests. The Home Secretary said in his letter that he was placing great store on the animals inspectorate and the animal procedures committee. I shall deal with them individually.

The Government employ 15 inspectors in the animals inspectorate to check on 21,000 vivisectionists, who cut up over 3 million animals each year. The Bill contains no provision to increase the number of inspectors and to ensure that they are independent of the industry. I understand that all of them are current or ex-licence holders. Worse than that, the local authorities and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals do not back them up by carrying out checks and reporting upon malpractices in laboratories and breeding establishments. A provision for such checks is contained in my Bill, but no similar provision is contained in the Government's Bill.

As for the Animal Procedures Committee, the Minister said in his letter that it would

"comprise scientific and lay members with an established concern for animal welfare."

It is a one-sided committee. It is filled with pro-vivisectionists. If the committee is to play a central role in looking after the welfare of animals it should be independent of any vested interest. It should specifically exclude those who have a vested interest in animal experiments—for example, those who have links with drug companies and licensed experimenters. My Bill ensures that. The Government's Bill does the opposite.

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps I ought not to be drawn into a debate with the hon. Gentleman, whose mind is so closed on this issue, but I wonder whether I may mention to him four members of the advisory committee: Dr. Balls of FRAME, Mr. Hollands, the secretary of the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Vivisection, the scientific adviser to the RSPCA, Dr. Hampson, and the legal adviser to the RSPCA, Mr. Field-Fisher. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us which vested interest they represent?

Mr. Cohen: I shall not be drawn by the Minister on that point. That committee is overwhelmingly loaded with vested interests and licence holders. The Minister referred to Dr. Balls of FRAME. He has written papers which make it clear that he has taken part in a number of vivisections and animal experiments, yet the Minister tells the House that he belongs to the anti-vivisection lobby. If that is the best that he can do, he will have to do much better. The Animal Procedures Committee should be independent. It should also play another role. Its primary responsibility should be to secure each year a continuing and sizeable decrease in the use of animals in laboratories. As has been said, nothing in the Bill is about getting any reduction, any regulation or continuing reduction, in animal usage.

The breeding establishments obviously need to be regulated. They have grown up uncontrolled in the last few years, and I have submitted parliamentary questions to the Minister urging the strong regulation of breeding establishments. My Bill would ensure such proper regulation and the provisions in it make the Government's provisions look feeble. For example, only purpose-bred animals could be used, and that would stop the use of stolen pets. I have a local paper here which carries the headline, "Catnapped."

Domestic pets are being stolen for use in laboratories, and my Bill would ensure harsh penalties for anybody engaging in that practice. It would also ensure that the origin of animals in the possession of laboratories and breeding establishments and those animals that are sold by them would have to be fully recorded. The Minister talks about provisions in the Bill going along this route, but under the Bill it will not be possible to implement them because, as has been said, the inspectorate is low on staff and the RSPCA and the local authorities are not to be given responsibility for regular spot checks of breeding establishments.

Local authorities have a check role in other countries. In Sweden, for example, municipal authorities have that right. Why can the Government not give such a regulatory role to our local authorities and the RSPCA? They would add greatly to the strength of the underpowered inspectorate. The Bill merely refers to the inspectors in that role, but the inspectorate has limited numbers and a limited role in respect of the breeding establishments. The Bill does not even cover the full range of animals which may be bred for experimentation, and needs substantial tightening up in terms of regulating breeding establishments.

Under my Bill, the export of animals for experimentation would be banned, but not under the Government's Bill. The heart of the Government's measure is the dual system of personal and project licensing, and many hon. Members have set great store by that. My hon. Friend the Member for Erdington set great store by this new system, but it is little more than a rubber stamp. How can anything with such a small inspectorate to implement it be any more than a rubber stamp? How can the Animal Procedures Committee, which is of non-independent composition and is loaded with pro-vivisection vested interests, be more than a rubber stamp?

Clauses 3, 4 and 5 go into great detail about how the Secretary of State has to weigh the value of experiments before he grants a project licence, and he does that on the basis of his committee's advice. Given the composition of that committee, it is clear which way that advice will be biased. The present system for signing the appropriate form for experiments to be carried out will just be transferred to the approval of a personal and project licence.

I want to read to the House a couple of examples showing how the system operates at the moment. There is no substantial change to this under the Government proposal. The first point about personal licences is that Lord Platt, an ex-president of the Royal College of Physicians, said:

"As a professor of medicine, I had to sign many applications for licences and certificates and as head of a Royal College had

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to countersign hundreds of them. As a member of the Medical Research Council I had to acquiesce in them and for several years I was a member of the Home Office committee set up by the Act of 1876. I think a lot of the signing and countersigning, although it may have preventive value in discouraging research workers from embarking on particularly undesirable experiments, is done as a routine. I base this on the fact, which I noticed many times, that if I took the unusual, unexpected and unwelcome action of refusing to sign, the applicants went to another professor or to the head of another Royal College who promptly signed for them."

Can the Minister say that that will not happen in future?

Mr. Mellor: Yes.

Mr. Cohen: I hope that the Minister's intervention has been recorded. We shall hold him to account for that. There may be another stage with the advisory committee, but the person who signs in the first place for the project licence to be approved will do so as a matter of routine, as did Lord Platt.

Professor Sir Cyril Clarke said at a British Association for the Advancement of Science symposium in 1982:

"Does Dr. Rankin think the signing of animal licences by heads of certain organisations does anything more than to add an air of respectability to the licence?"

The Government are merely trying to add an air of respectability.

"A few years ago I had an administrative job and nearly every morning there used to land on my desk ten or more animal licences. While I did my best I did not really feel I knew what many of the applicants were asking for. One of the most difficult things was to know where to sign. Fortunately I met fairly soon the then President of the Royal Society and he said 'What you want to do is to have a stamp. If you have a stamp you can look through the certificates and you can give the stamp to your secretary and save a great deal of time.' I did this and it was very helpful as regards time, but I still did not think I was doing my job. I do not believe that anybody, not even the President of the Royal Society, can know the ins and outs of all the applications for a licence."

Such processes will continue in a revised form—perhaps I should say on a revised form — under the Government's procedures. The letter heading of a drug company or an existing licence holder will probably be enough for a project licence to be granted and for the person receiving the licence to be able to carry out experiments on a vast number of animals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Erdington mentioned the Littlewood committee. The Government even abandoned that committee's proposal for an external referee. That would at least have introduced an outside referee—if only nominal—to judge projects. There will be no realistic, independent review of whether a project is worth while or of whether using animals is the best way to achieve the aims of a project. Denmark passed an Act in 1977 which provided that alternatives must be used wherever possible. Under our Government's preferred method of regulation, no similar provision appears in the Bill.

My last major point relates to health issues and the drug companies. Many animal experiments are for "me too" products—similar products to existing ones, with only slight alterations for a different brand name. Those are repetitive products, of no medical benefit, and they involve repetitive animal tests. Those are unnecessary tests. As an article in the *Sunday People* observed:

"The name of the game is profits and to hell with animal suffering."

Those tests should be stopped.

Drugs companies are more interested in cures, particularly wonder cures, than in preventing illness or tackling the causes of disease. The wonder cures are much more profitable, but, although they provide more profits for the drugs companies, they mean more illness and unnecessary deaths for humans and animals. While this goes on all resources are put into animal tests, precious few resources are being applied to preventive medicine, and the Government have cut the resources available to the Health Service for preventive medicine. There is little given to help deal with the environmental and social causes of, for example, Britain's biggest killers, cancer and heart disease. These diseases could be greatly reduced by epidemiological studies of their causes and by strong Government action, for example in banning known carcinogens from our environment and action against smoking to improve the quality of our life.

It is cheaper to carry out tests on animals than to have long, carefully controlled tests on human beings. Even for cures, self-culture tests are often superior to animal tests. That is not my idea, but a statement from the Institution of Cancer Research. Opren was produced for arthritis sufferers after extensive tests on animals, but the drug was disastrous and brought about many human deaths. One cannot extropolate from animals to humans in many cases.

The Minister spoke about face cosmetics. Which animals have faces similar to the human face? Most of them have fur. The nearest equivalent is probably a baboon's bum. I know that many Conservative Members may look similar, but the Minister cannot argue that there can be a proper extrapolation from such tests. Tissue culture is more reliable, more consistent and more humane. As as rule of thumb, drugs should not be given to humans until they have been tested on humans in properly controlled conditions. That is expensive, but it is much better for the nation's health and for stopping the vast loss of life.

The Bill is inadequate. It institutionalises the killing of 67,000 animals every week without any proof of worthwhile purpose. The number will go up once the Bill is on the statute book. There is no promotion of non-animal alternatives, and no immediate ban on the unnecessary and morally unacceptable experiments. There is no proper regulation—it is left firmly in the hands of the experimenters. There is no attempt to shift the burden of proof to those who carry out experiments, rather than giving them licences without problems. There is no shift from vivisection-based drugs treatment to preventive medicine and tackling causes. For those reasons, I shall oppose the Bill.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I remind the House that 17 right hon. and hon. Members still wish to take part in the debate. If the House passes the motion at 10 o'clock, we can go on a little longer, but if all hon. Members make speeches of 30 minutes, we shall be rather late.

9.54 pm

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I suppose that I should welcome the Bill, which was introduced by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary with his customary good humour and moderation. After all, we have waited 110 years for an amendment to the substantive Act. During

that period, there have been numerous instances of leading figures in our society expressing doubt and misgiving about the practice of using animals in experiments. They have included the great Lord Shaftesbury, Archbishop Manning, Cardinal Newman, Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mahatma Gandhi and many others. Perhaps the one closest to my memory is a former colleague in the House, Lord Houghton of Sowerby. Many leading figures in our society, respected writers and so on, have held that it is morally wrong to use animals as a laboratory tool. Today, however, we must face the fact that much more is known about these controversial practices. Many of my constituents certainly view them with revulsion, all the more so since there is now growing scientific evidence that some experimentation is inconclusive and less effective than clinical case studies.

Over 20 years ago Sir George Pickering, regius professor of medicine at Oxford university, told us that he had

"often heard it said that the scientific basis of medicine is applied physiology and therapeutics applied pharmacology. The idea, as I understand it, is that fundamental truths are revealed in laboratory experiments on lower animals and are then applied to the problems of the sick patient. Having been myself trained as a physiologist, I feel in a way competent to assess such a claim. It is plain nonsense."

I do not expect everyone to agree with all that I am about to say, but a wide range of alternative techniques are now available, including cell and organ cultures, bacteria, yeast and enzyme systems, computer prediction and clinical observation.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mrs. Oppenheim) made an impressive speech when she made the case for animal experimentation being justified on the ground that it was necessary for the conquest of disease in man. For a moment I shall concede that. But in my opinion to use animals for testing cosmetics is wrong. It is wicked to use a sentient, captive and unconsenting individual and to cause it suffering and pain when the only potential benefit is to beautify someone else. For me that is unacceptable. The test of the Bill then is to what extent it will eliminate or at least reduce suffering, pain and distress to laboratory animals.

As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) said, the Bill is not to be judged as a political issue. It is a moral issue. Only about half the research involving the suffering of laboratory animals is conducted for medical reasons. Only about one-fifth is conducted to satisfy the requirements of our safety laws. In many cases where animals are used for non-medical purposes, alternative techniques are available, and yet in 1984, the last year for which I have figures, 17,512 animals were used to test cosmetics and toiletries.

One would think that after 110 years in gestation the Bill would provide the opportunity at last to strike a blow for more civilised behaviour and for sanity by eliminating all animal testing for non-medical purposes. That is what I have dreamed of for the last 30 years. I had hoped that someone would have the courage to introduce such a Bill.

A constituent drew my attention to the United Kingdom newspaper for the Wellcome Foundation published as recently as 18 November which said:

"Wellcome has been active in the consultation stages of the Government proposals. If these are enacted, the company does not believe that it would lead to any hindrance in its research involving animals."

That is what the commercial world thinks about the Bill —that it will be no hindrance to its work.

Mr. Mellor: I do not think that my hon. Friend has chosen the best example. The Wellcome Foundation is a non-profit-making organisation and is the world's largest producer of vaccines, especially vaccines to cure animal diseases. It would be grossly irresponsible if anything that we proposed interfered with its work. However, every piece of work that it does will, under the Bill, be subject to a project licence. I do not think that my hon. Friend's constituents are asking him to stop the work of the Wellcome Foundation.

Sir Bernard Braine: Obviously, each application must be judged on its merits. I am not seeking to stop that kind of work.

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]* and the Ways and Means Motion may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Durant.]*

Sir Bernard Braine: I am not seeking to stop the work of the Wellcome Foundation. The Minister will have responsibility for judging each application on its merits. What I am saying is that any hope that the Bill would reduce the numbers of animals used—and I am referring to non-medical experiments—has not been realised.

The Committee for Information on Animal Research, which I understand is a moderate body, is highly critical of the Bill. It feels that in certain areas it is too weak to prevent unnecessary pain, and in others is too vague to be regarded as an advance in the protection of animals.

My hon. Friend has spurred me on to say a great deal more than I had intended. The Bill stipulates that no cat or dog should be used under licence unless it has been bred at or obtained from a designated breeding establishment, although exceptions may be made by the Secretary of State. Why should there be any exceptions? Cannot the Home Office understand the disgust felt by ordinary people that dogs and cats are bred for experimentation of that kind? If such animals are used, what is the likely effect regarding dogs and cats stolen from their owners and traded to laboratories?

Under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, the use of animals to gain surgical dexterity was prohibited. However, this Bill relaxes that provision so that animals can be used to practice micro-surgical techniques. My hon. Friend said a few moments ago that all applications would be referred to the Animals Procedures Committee. Presumably projects would be carried out only under terminal anaesthesia. Who will constitute that committee? There have been great advances since 1876. Distinguished surgeons have experimented with live human foetuses—injecting them with steroids, killing and then dissecting them and then reporting their findings in the medical literature. If such murderous behaviour was legal, why should we show concern about animals?

Where are the safeguards against the re-use of laboratory animals and their subjection to repeated procedures? The restrictions in the Bill do not take effect until an animal has been subjected to a series of procedures. What, pray, constitutes a series of procedures? The Committee for Information on Animal Research asks:

"When does one procedure become a series, and what sort of series ranks as one procedure? Consider as an example giving an

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injection one day, putting dye in food the next day, taking samples two days later, and then performing the cycle again, with or without variations, for the next six weeks. Is this one procedure, or seven, or 21 or more? Until the terms are defined protection against re-use is meaningless, and a researcher who wanted to keep an expensive primate permanently available could link various routes routines to make a series."

All that is to be governed by a code of practice. Neither the hon. Member for Erdington nor I had that document before the debate started.

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Birmingham): I picked it up from the Vote Office at 10 minutes to 11.

Sir Bernard Braine: In that case, the hon. Gentleman is reinforcing my point. He received his copy much later. I went out and got mine. I have had no opportunity to read it.

Mr. Hughes: Ten minutes to 11 in the morning.

Sir Bernard Braine: In that case, the hon. Gentleman received an earlier warning than I did. I did not receive the document, and I doubt whether any other hon. Member received it before the debate started. The hon. Gentleman is being helpful. If he received it at 11 am even he would be a genius to have mastered it by now and to be able to test the Bill against what it says.

Let me go further. The Bill does not require experimenters to use humane alternatives. It does not require such persons to be skilled in analgesia, anaesthesia, painless death or even in the handling of animals. Moreover, it increases the secrecy of animal experimentation. That does against the trend in recent days when public and Parliament have been asking for more disclosure of what goes on behind the scenes. Those who breach confidentiality can be sent to prison. What happens to accountability in those circumstances?

A great deal of reliance is put upon the judgment of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. How is that to be exercised? How can he judge pain and distress? Who will advise him? Will he be guided by the people who carry out the experiments? He will have the advisory committee but we want to know who will be on that. That is fundamental to an understanding of the safeguards that are supposed to be laid down in the Bill.

There will be a statutory advisory body with wide powers to advise on policy, practice and procedure. Who will constitute that body? Who will man its subcommittees? There Lordships tried to strengthen this part of the Bill in another place. In Committee the Bill will have to be tightened up a great deal more when we come to the relevant clauses. We should be told about this before the vote, not after it. I feel badly let down. Had I had the opportunity to study the draft code of conduct beforehand, I might have understood the Bill better.

I ask these questions because we are being asked to approve the Bill without knowing in advance what the guidelines will be. The RSPCA has reported today the most appalling growth of ill-treatment of animals in Britain.

Dr. M. S. Miller: The right hon. Gentleman should follow that up by saying that the RSPCA's comments today showed great cruelty to animals, not from scientists but from the public.

Sir Bernard Braine: Exactly. I agree with that. I was simply pointing out that we should view the way in which we treat animals in Britain with increasing concern. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for helping me to underline it.

I understand that the RSPCA has seen the guidelines in advance and I can say that it is disturbed by some of them. For example it does not consider that sufficient scientific expertise will be brought to bear on the licensing procedure. Then again where is the guarantee, should an experiment be designed to deliberately inflict substantial stress, that the expert advice of an animal ethologist will be sought automatically?

Pain is not only the cause of distress for laboratory animals. Where then does the Bill provide a safeguard for larger animals used in long-term studies to allow them to play and have social contacts? Primates are expensive animals to acquire, so one does not want just to inject them and kill them off. What are the arrangements for treating these animals as humanely as possible?

All licence applications for work on cosmetics will be referred to the animal procedures committee. Why is there not the same requirement for work on alcohol and smoking-related research? For eight years I was chairman of the National Council on Alcoholism, and I know something about this national scourge. I am also president of the Greater London Alcohol Advisory Service which covers the capital. If animals are used in this type of research—I am not sure that they are—why are they not subjected to exactly the same sort of controls as licence applications for work on cosmetics?

Mr. Thurnham: Is my right hon. Friend satisfied with the provisions for the protection of mammalian embryos, as shown in clause 1(2)?

Sir Bernard Braine: I shall not be drawn on that. It is not for me to say, because I am not an expert in this field. I shall not speak about particular procedures. There are, however, massive gaps in the Bill.

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham) *indicated assent.*

Sir Bernard Braine: I note that my hon. Friend is nodding in agreement. We can fill the gaps in Committee, but it is sad to bring a Bill of such consequence to the House without having the guidelines laid before us so that we can study them in advance.

If such points are raised by animal protection groups, why was not thought given to them ealier? Why bring the Bill before us with these questions unanswered? The Bill is too little and too late. It is an acute disappointment to me, and I predict that it will do little to reassure the many people who view animal experimentation, especially for non-medical purposes, with distaste, if not disgust.

Unless we have clear answers to all these questions, I cannot support the Bill. I know that it will get its Second Reading and will go to Standing Committee. Strenuous efforts will be made to improve it. I see around me those hon. Members who know a great deal more about this matter than I do. At the end of the day, the test is: does the Bill reduce the number of animals used in these experiments? Does it mean that they will be handled more humanely? Does it eliminate the use of animals in experiments for non-medical purposes? That is the test. I venture to think that the Bill in its present form will not not pass it.

10.13 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I should like to emulate hon. Members by giving a short speech. For better or for worse, I seem to have been associated during the past six or seven years with animal experimentation. I notice that the hon. Member who used to represent Wellingborough——

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): I still do.

Mr. Garrett: Despile boundary changes, the hon. Gentleman still represents that constituency. Well done. On 27 June 1979, he introduced the Protection of Animals (Scientific Purposes) Bill. He will well remember the eight acrimonious sittings before the legislation was finally abandoned. We took the advice of the Minister, who said that there would be time to await Council of Europe legislation. That legislation was agreed upon. The Government have ratified the treaty—not all European countries have. In the main, the Bill fulfils virtually all the matters that were in the protocol.

It seems fashionable tonight to declare an interest. By nature, I am a shy, retiring man and I do not brag too much about my achievements, but I must declare an interest in that I am the honourary chairman of a very notable and worthy organisation — the all-party group for the chemical industry. Hon. Members who are speaking in this debate and who are not members of that group should consider joining that highly educative body where the debate and discussion take place without any acrimony but we all emerge somewhat wiser.

I also have to declare an interest in that for 20 years I was an employee of Imperial Chemical Industries. I worked with scientists and found that they were human beings like us. They are as sensitive as anyone here tonight. If one works in the chemical industry, one quickly understands that it involves handling dangerous substances. Therefore, it is important to recognise that the people who work in the industry need to know that those dangerous substances are properly tested. If one wanted to forget about work and went home, one would find that there are paints, detergents, adhesives, man-made fibres, pharmaceuticals and modern foods which all have a chemical content in one form or another. We all know that such chemicals, in high enough quantity, can cause immense harm. An innocuous chemical such as salt can damage the human body sometimes beyond repair. Therefore, each one of us has to assume that no chemical can be considered totally harmless. I think that the House will agree that it is essential that the House should accept the responsibility to protect society from the harmful effect of certain chemicals, particularly at work. The people who produce and manufacture so many of the material needs that we use at work or in everyday life should also be given some protection. It is intolerable to expect society to expose people to chemicals without prior investigation as to the danger of the chemicals. I hope that nobody will challenge that analysis.

We are all talking about 1876. That was the heyday of Victorianism, when our manufacturing base was not declining but was at its peak and was continuing to expand. Even the Victorians recognised the consequences of long exposure to chemicals. It was primarily for that purpose that experiments took place in that period. The experiments were of a much wider degree than now with much more intensity and certainly less care for animals. When the Victorians introduced the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876, they were already alarmed about the exposure of their fellow beings to chemicals. After the Act, some experiments helped the human race to survive when they were involved in production to meet material needs. Much more knowledge came from that Act and the proper control of experiments, from which we have benefited. However, we cannot deny that that knowledge was gained through animal experimentation. Society has been made responsible for the care of animals, but it has gained, too.

Today most experiments can be carried out only on living mammals. Indeed, mammals meet the needs of most experiments that are necessary for our society. At present, no suitable alternatives are available. The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) quoted examples of substitutes at length. I admire his view, but, frankly, those substitutes do not measure up to the need to experiment on mammals, of which the most popular is the rat. To protect the human race, it is necessary to have those experiments.

This might surprise some hon. Members. Rats and some other mammals show a surprising similarity to man in their response to toxic substances.

Dr. M. S. Miller: Man sometimes shows a surprising similarity to rats. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Garrett: Hon. Members can say that, but I am sticking to my view.

To reject animal experiments on the basis of an occasional failure would be no substitute, and would not help to protect mankind. If, for example, the rat is not allowed to substitute for man, and if scientific knowledge in medicines and even foodstuffs is to be halted or restricted, some people might welcome it, but I regret to say that man will have to be the substitute. If man is not the substitute, it all stops. Progress stays where it is. Is that what opponents of the measure would like?

I have declared my interest in the chemical industry. It is a responsible industry. It remains actively committed to seeking a voluntary alternative, as an integral part of its work, but none has yet emerged.

I pay tribute to those employed in the industry because they are fully aware of their responsibilities, socially and in law. They look upon the Bill as a correcting balance in the care of animals. At the same time, pushing forward the frontiers of science will benefit not only this generation, but future generations. I hope that we can extend our horizons to think of those future generations. I support the Bill in its entirety and I hope that most of my colleagues will, too.

10.18 pm

Mr. Charles Irving (Cheltenham): I have sat through the debate and listened to every speech. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) on a most powerful speech. He is a great defender of people and animals, and he is concerned about abuses, too. My right hon. Friend is recognised on both sides of the House for the compassion and concern that he displayed this evening.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will not mind if I say that he was just a trifle hard on my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. The Under-Secretary deserves an absolute

[Mr. Charles Irving]

accolade for what he has achieved tonight in bringing this measure to the House. We have waited more than 110 years for it.

There are many hon. Members, and I am one, who do not agree with all that is in the Bill. I accept that in this particularly sensitive subject it would be very difficult indeed to find common ground with reason. The FRAME organisation, whose director is Mr. Ball, produced a moderate and sensible report, one which would be very difficult for most reasonable people to find much fault with. We will not obtain, whatever happens, all that some Members, particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point, and I, would like to see. I would like to go much further than the Bill but I think that we must be satisfied as from little acorns grow large oak trees.

Few people would argue that the great strides in medicine which have rid the world of the most appalling diseases, owe much to the extensive testing of drugs on animals. Sadly, this is perhaps where some of us part company. In a great many cases that unnecessarily causes the most appalling pain and suffering.

Great strides have also been made in the science of testing drugs. It is time that we redressed the subject of animal welfare in the light of these changes and advances *[Interruption.]* I shall wait for the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Hughes) to get up from his knees. I look forward to the hon. Gentleman's speeches as they are always first-class.

Mr. Mark Hughes: I was conducting a simple animal experiment, Sir.

Mr. Irving: The hon. Gentleman will see that the continuation of my speech has brought him an immediate recovery.

Basically, many of the proposals under the European Commission appear to me to be somewhat more compassionate than some of the British proposals in the Bill. For instance, we have not banned the LD50 experiments and we are rather inclined to allow very painful tests for trivial commercialism. We do not require scientists to use alternative techniques and the Bill does not require experimentors to be skilled in pain killing. However, with all the faults, we are making progress and that is why I feel that I must support the Bill tonight.

I welcome its main provisions. It establishes a much stricter regulatory control over those who engage in animal experimentation. It also takes a step forward in the recognition of animal welfare by placing a duty on those engaged in experimentation to minimise the pain, suffering and distress that may be caused to laboratory animals. It does not go far enough for me and for some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, but it is a beginning, and it has been a long time arriving. The strict provisions surrounding the granting of personal and project licences will, I hope, raise the standards of care for laboratory animals. They should also ensure that projects whose value remains marginal in respect of the pain or distress caused to animals will be stopped.

I congratulate the royal colleges on stepping up coverage of such issues and on providing new training and qualifications for those engaged in laboratory work with animals. I recognise the rapid pace of change in the medical and scientific world and the need for the Home Secretary to be constantly advised in matters relating to the granting of licences. The Home Secretary will forgive me if I say that I know of no legislation that can make a committee truly effective.

The Home Office inspectorate has received universal praise for its commitment and work. I endorse that. The Bill will no doubt drastically increase its workload. At present, 15 inspectors monitoring more than 500 establishments and about 3·5 million experiments annually. There is an urgent need to redress the inspectors' work load in the light of the Bill. I hope that we shall hear a commitment from the Secretary of State in this respect. I recognise the appalling difficulty in trying to frame objective legal tests for pain and distress, which ultimately are subjective assessments.

The Bill is full of weaknesses, but I can offer no constructive advice on the issue, except to say that, in view of the grave concern among the organisations that care for animals, half a loaf is better than none.

10.32 pm

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): As so many right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak on the Bill, I shall restrict my remarks to one subject—the fact that the Bill does not eliminate all experiments for purposes of warfare. I oppose the Bill for many reasons, but they have been well spelt out by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and partly by the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine).

Warfare experiments are the most obscene, unacceptable and disgusting of animal experiments. They are used for exactly the opposite reasons that the experimenters would have us believe. I am not alone in assuming that. The majority of the British people agree with me, according to the poll conducted by the National Anti-Vivisection Society. I understand that a distinguished director of that organisation has just resigned, and I wish to pay tribute in the Chamber to Brian Gunn for his dedicated, tireless work on behalf of the organisation.

The poll carried out by the NAVS showed that 78 per cent. of people were against testing animals on nerve gases, 73 per cent. were against experiments to test the effectiveness of weapons, 74 per cent. were against wounding experiments, and 70 per cent. wanted a ban and new legislation on warfare experiments. Any hon. Member who goes into the Lobby to vote in favour of the Bill will be voting against the wishes of the vast majority of the people.

Donald Barnes, a distinguished American scientist who has experimented on animals once said:

"The more I look back I see their"—

that is, the scientists'—

"greatest fear is in people finding out how the animals are treated and thereby initiating steps to correct them."

I hope that small steps will be taken this evening along the path that Donald Barnes wishes to go.

That quotation came from a leaflet produced by a new organisation called Peace and Animal Welfare. It links the obscenity of the use of animals for warfare experiments with those people in the peace movement who wish to eliminate the use of chemical and biological weapons.

The vast majority of the experiments to which I have referred are carried out at Porton Down. I had the opportunity—I shall not say pleasure—of going to the chemical defence establishment to see what happens there, or rather, I thought that I was going to see what happened.

I spent a day at Porton Down and did not see one experiment although 30 animals are tortured to death there every day. I was taken into a number of laboratories, but there was not one animal. That is not the way to treat elected Members of this Parliament. We, above all, should be able to see what is happening there. If elected representatives cannot see, what opportunity is there for the people to know what happens? We have found out what happens, which is why more and more people will demand that that establishment is closed.

All we saw was a few beagle dogs playing in a cage not realising that within a matter of time they would receive a lethal dose from a hypothermic needle which would turn that happy life into a living hell of pain and suffering.

I am not talking about a few animals only. Let us consider the number of animals that are unnecessarily wasted at Porton Down. Between 1952 and 1970 at Porton Down alone—many experiments are carried out at other establishments on behalf of the scientists at Porton Down —1,000 monkeys, nearly 200,000 guinea pigs and 1·75 million mice were used in experiments. That is the magnitude of the problem. As with many other numbers that we are given by defence experts, we suspect that the numbers are kept low and are well short of the true figure.

In 1984, scientists admitted that 11,000 animals died at Porton Down as a result of experiments, the majority of which were the result of chemical experiments.

Why does that hideous place exist? I said that I would demonstrate that propaganda plays an important part in its existence. We live in the world of Winston Smith in George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" and double speak. An attempt is made to convince us that wounding experiments are to learn about healing, when they are about mutilation. An attempt is made to convince us that chemical and biological weapon experiments are to learn about defence when they are really about offence. We are told that they are about protection, when they are really about killing. We are told that they are about armies, when they are really about civilians.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Boyes: I shall give way in my own time, not when you lot want. Chemical weapons are not about armies. They will be aimed at unprotected civilians. There is all this nonsense about protective clothing, but there will be none for dock workers, those who work on airfields or for backup forces for those at the front. Innocent civilians will be the targets of chemical weapons, and there will be no protection for them, no matter how many animals die at Porton Down.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I share his abhorrence of needless experimentation on animals. Can I offer an answer to his question about why there is a need for experimentation at places such as Porton Down and Winterbourne Gunner? As long as the Soviet Union has a massive chemical weapon capability down to basic unit level, which is being used in Afghanistan and elsewhere, and when the German civilian population has no protection, does he agree that there is a duty on any Government to try to provide the basic minimum of protection for troops when faced with aggression? The hon. Gentleman knows that Britain has no offensive chemical weapon capability.

Mr. Boyes: I can only conclude that the hon. Gentleman wanted to make that point and has not listened to a word that I said. I have just demonstrated that experiments at Porton Down have nothing to do with protecting the population or troops, but everything to do with conning people into believing that there is a defence against chemical weapons. We know that, as with nuclear weapons, there is no defence for the unprotected population. If man is so stupid as to launch chemical or nuclear weapons at others, he will suffer for his stupidity. That has nothing to do with the millions of animals that are tortured to death in the name of protecting man, when there is no protection.

Sheep, pigs, monkeys and many other animals are used in wounding experiments. In a journal called *Injury*, scientists at the chemical research establishment write:

"Anaesthetised rhesus monkeys were shot in the head to investigate the effects of injury. In the 20 experimental animals, a penetrating injury was inflicted by a steel ball with a diameter of 3·2 mm fired at a range of 5 to 10 m from a smooth barrel with an estimated impact velocity of 1,000 m per second. The animals survived from two to 169 minutes."

After having part of their head blasted away from 5 m. Why? We learn more in one hour in a battlefield than from hundreds of thousands of such experiments. Another publication by NAVS says:

"Human beings and animals are physiologically different, so such tests can be irrelevant."

Another document says:

"Doctors at the famous Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast, who have to deal with the real victims of a continuing war, believe that Porton experiments are of no value to them in treating human patients."

What is the purpose of these experiments if they have no value for human beings? Why has the Minister not said categorically and clearly that the Government will put an end to such nonsense? And what about the chemical and biological experiments? I shall refer to just two of them. All of the experiments are well documented. The Ministry of Defence says that it cannot provide the answers, for security reasons, but the results have been published. I shall quote only from material that has been published by the Porton Down scientists. On the protection of primates against soman poisoning by pretreatment with pyridostigmine it is said that

"Rhesus monkeys were exposed to soman nerve gas in experiments designed to test an antidote. After a medium dose of soman, together with antidote, the animals became prostrate with violent convulsions. After 1-11 minutes they lost consciousness, and breathing became slow, shallow and laboured and the animals appeared very close to death. After a high dose of soman the animals collapsed within a minute, with violent convulsions and laboured breathing. The animals surviving this stage regained consciousness after 10-30 minutes. The animals then made attempts to crawl about the cage but relapsed after about 1 hour and died."

Are right hon. and hon. Members able to imagine the pain and suffering that those animals went through during the time taken by the experiments? Is it not obscene? Is there not something the matter with men who are prepared to carry out experiments of that kind on animals?

It has also been said about the use of cyanide gas on beagle dogs that

"Signs of laboured breathing were 'marked'. Four out of six dogs recovered after one hour but one suffered two grand-mal epileptiform seizures. The sixth dog died 44 minutes after injection of the cyanide."

I asked a parliamentary question about this to discover whether any anaesthetic was given to the dogs to help them through this experiment. The Minister said that no

[Mr. Boyes]

anaesthetic was administered to them because the Ministry of Defence could not otherwise have carried out the experiments. Beagle dogs are being allowed to crawl around their cages in agony and to take 45 minutes to die.

For animals, Porton Down means torture, mutilation, agony and a slow, lingering death. For people, Porton Down means shame, disgust and degradation. However, as Donald Barnes, the distinguished United States of America scientist said, the more he looked back the more he realised that their greatest fear was that people would find out how animals were being treated and that they would take steps to correct it. I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that people are finding out and will initiate steps to ensure that neither Porton Down nor any other chemical defence establishment that treats animals in this way is allowed to continue to exist.

10.49 pm

Mr. John Ward (Poole): I begin by paying my tribute to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department. It is through his patience and persistence that this Bill has been introduced. As a member of the FRAME all-party parliamentary group I should also like to acknowledge the help that I and other hon. Members have received from the chairman of the trustees, Dr. Michael Balls, and its parliamentary consultant, Mr. Bill Annett. Their reasonable, practical and unexcited approach to a subject that is of great concern to so many hon. Members has been an example to all those who would influence the working of Parliament.

I freely acknowledge that this Bill will not satisfy all those who are concerned about animal welfare. Nothing less than a complete ban on animal experiments will satisfy certain groups of people. I am of that group which acknowledges, regrettably, that some animal experiments are still necessary to further the search for knowledge to alleviate human suffering. To those who give priority to the saving of human lives the FRAME goal of reducing the numbers of animals used, minimising their suffering and replacing them with alternatives where possible and as soon as possible, must surely be the right way forward.

I cannot ignore the statement sent to me by the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research which said that almost all the significant advances in the control of cancer have at some point required experiments on animals. Concerned though I am at any suffering inflicted on animals, I support the Bill as a major and sensible step forward. There are one or two areas where I share the anxiety expressed to me by some of my constituents, many of whom support the main thrust of the Bill and yet seek reassurances, as I do, that every alternative is being explored. One of these areas is the Draize eye irritancy test and I understand that work on alternatives is already at an advanced stage. I hope that when the Bill reaches the Committee stage, as it surely will, there will be an examination to see whether the work on an alternative to the Draize test can be speeded up so that an alternative can be introduced at the earliest possible moment.

The other matter of great concern is the LD50 test. Other hon. Members have spoken about that. It has been said that the formal LD50 test is widely thought to be unscientific and wasteful of animal lives. Reference has been made to the LD50 limit test and I understand that the development of alternatives to this test is proceeding with all speed. I should like to be sure that the Committee gives positive encouragement to ensure that progress continues. I can find no better words to give my reasons for welcoming the Bill than those used in the joint statement issued by the British Veterinary Association, the Campaign for the Reform of Animal Experimentation and the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments. The statement says,

> "It is our belief that it represents the effective compromise between the welfare needs of animals, the legitimate demands of the principles for accountability and the equally legitimate requirements of medicine, science and commerce."

Those words will capture the mood of the House. I hope the Bill has a speedy passage.

10.53 pm

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): I agree with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) about the deliberate inflicting of wounds on animals for the purpose of discovering how people might react to warfare. That is where the line should be drawn in animal experiments. I am sure that the Minister, while he may have an opinion about the matter, realises that that is not within the scope of the Bill, and it is to the Bill that I wish to refer.

As a medical practitioner, my objective is to cure people. However, that objective should not include the unnecessary inflicting of pain upon any other species. But that is a secondary matter, and I do not start from the premise that we must reduce the number of experiments on animals. I should like the number to be reduced, but that is not my main objective. My main objective is to try to cure many of the illnesses which afflict us.

I understand the moral and ethical objections to the use of animals in experiments, though there are such objections to eating the flesh of animals, and anyone who opposes scientific research on animals surely must be a vegetarian. We who believe that experiments on animals are necessary cannot persuade those who believe that animals should be treated in the same way as humans, and there is little point in trying to reason with such people.

There is not one hon. Member who has not benefited from animals experimentation, whether in the anaesthetic given for the removal of a tooth or in the injections or tablets that we are given before making a trip abroad. In the process of being born, everyone has benefited from animal experimentation.

We have to decide whether, on balance, experiments on animals are defensible. That decision must not be made by those who object to the use of animals; it must be made by people who agree that animal experimentation is necessary. The Government have no alternative but to listen to the views of those who are trying to cure our people.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) said that it was not up to us to make such decisions. But it is. We often have to take such decisions, and I strongly oppose tying the hands of people who want to do everything that they can to cure diseases.

Of course there are other ways of experimenting. One can experiment with tissue culture or cells, but eventually it is essential to test drugs on animals. More than 80 per cent. of the animals used in experiments are rats or mice, and we do not usually hesitate to get rid of them by any possible means.

A cell in a test tube or tissue in a dish does not react in the same way as cells in the body, which contain triggers that tell us whether a drug will work or will bring us out in a rash or whatever. That can be detected only by introducing a drug into an animal, whether by injection or by ingestion.

Mr. Boyes: I hesitate to be critical of the doctor who cured the pain in my arm, but I ask my hon. Friend to reflect on one point. Let us assume that his analysis is correct. One of the problems is that most drugs are made by profit-making concerns, which need to make a massive profit. Therefore, the same experiments are conducted on animals in thousands of laboratories throughout the world. Would it not be helpful if each of these laboratories exchanged information, because millions of animals would be saved from suffering in that way alone?

Dr. Miller: That argument bears careful consideration. However, it does not impinge on the moral aspect of whether experimentation on animals is permissible. I agree that if there are ways to cut down on the number of animals used we should use them, and that would be one way. However, there would be a problem, because not all the drugs about which my hon. Friend is talking are the same. There are subtle differences, as my hon. Friend will know if he takes medicines. Nowadays, particularly with computerisation, many doctors and general practitioners feed information on side effects into a computer so that information can be gathered centrally. That means that it is necessary for minor variations to be made in drugs.

I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington that I have no interest in drug companies. I am not employed by them and do not hold a candle for them. However, they are doing a good job, and if there are ways to reduce the number of animals used, I am sure that they would want to use them, because animals are expensive.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point spoke about cosmetics, and that word is difficult to define. It means not only the products used for beautifying purposes, but those used to help, for example, the woman who has had a nasty operation on her neck, leaving a scar. The cosmetic that she needs to cover it needs to be tried out on animals. One cannot then jump to the conclusion that if the product is manufactured for so-called beauty purposes it should not be tested on animals, because it has to be. All products such as baby powder and skin lotions have to be tested on animals.

I am not making a plea for increasing the number of experiments, but we should look at the thing in balance. As has been said, we do not treat animals in exactly the same way as we treat human beings. If we have a dog or cat that has outlived the possibility of continuing its existence without pain, we have no hesitation in taking that animal to the vet to be put down. The RSPCA disposes of 150,000 dogs a year. Hon. Members say that constituents protest to them about cruelty to animals, but who is it other than their constituents who caused such cruelty to animals that 150,000 of them are thrown into the streets and have to be disposed of by the RSPCA?

I commend the Bill, which ties up a number of loose ends. It is not small. It has 30 clauses which contain much potential for tough argument. However, it shows a step towards progress in conjunction with the people who are doing the exprimentation. Unless we have good reason, it is not up to us to stultify this further development in medicine.

The right hon. Member for Castle Point says that he opposes experimentation which is not for medical purposes. Most experimentation is for medical or related purposes. I should hate to think that we would prevent the continuation of work to cure the diseases from which human beings suffer. There are two or more main groups of diseases—cardiovascular and cancer. Nothing should be put in the way of attempts to cure them.

Some hon. Members have referred to experimental surgery. I know at least two hon. Friends who would not be here without such experimentation. They have had serious open heart surgery, and no doubt other hon. Members or their relatives have had the same experience. Such operations could not be attempted without experiments on animals. We would fail in our duty as responsible legislators if we put obstacles in the way of further progress.

11.7 pm

Miss Janet Fookes (Plymouth, Drake): My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that the 1876 Act had served a useful purpose for many years. I differ from him on that. Those of us interested in animal welfare have been seeking for a long time to remove that Act from the statute book and to introduce a new one. It has been defective since well before I entered the House.

I recall in 1973 introducing a private Member's motion in which I called for an updating of the 1876 Act. One can see how long it takes for a Government to be prepared to take up such a difficult issue.

Successive Governments of both political complexions have dodged the issue. It has taken this Government some courage to come forward with a Bill. I suspect that had it not been for the personal commitment and drive of the Under-Secretary of State we should not be debating the Second Reading tonight.

Having waited so long, I am disappointed at the uneven standard of debate. In particular I thought that the contribution by the alliance was singularly disappointing. It was a string of ill-considered cliches with no coherent alternative. If that was a sample of the policy—making of that body, heaven help us if it ever comes to power. Its intention was to break the mould of British politics. I prefer to keep our traditional mould.

The key issue is the pain and suffering of an animal and how far the Bill prevents that pain and suffering. I have experienced a major disappointment in that the Government have not taken up the suggestion of the RSPCA—with which I am closely associated, as hon. Members know—for what it calls a no-pain clause, which would prohibit pain and suffering to any animal. It was probably too much to hope that that would be incorporated in any Bill. Setting aside that disappointment, the Bill provides a reasonable framework within which to go forward.

Two approaches could have been adopted. First, to name specific procedures that should be banned—and hon. Members have cited many examples, such as the LD50 test, the Draize eye irritancy test, cosmetic experiments and so on. The second approach, adopted by my hon. Friend the Minister, was to draw up far tighter controls, but without naming specific procedures to be prohibited.

[Miss Janet Fookes]

I can see at once the attraction of singling out particularly obnoxious tests and banning them. On the other hand, we must recognise the perils of that procedure. When drawing up a Bill we must be very precise in legal definitions. Most of the tests defy such definition. Scientific procedures and work move at a very fast pace. I suspect that any attempt to make such definitions, even by means of orders attached to Bills, would never keep up with the pace of scientific progress. We would always find certain experiments of which we disapproved not included in the Bill or any attachment to it.

Provided that there is good will by the Secretary of State of the day, the present approach is the one more likely to stand the test of time. Frankly, if we are going on precedent, it will be 109 or 110 years before there is another Bill. Therefore, it behoves us to try to get it right.

Much will depend on the way in which the Bill is interpreted. The code of practice is extremely important. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), I am a little concerned that we have not all that long had a code of practice. I recognise the Government's difficulty in presenting this to us. I am sure that there will be ample opportunity in the remaining stages of the Bill to consider that key point closely.

I wish to raise only a few specific points, as I realise that many hon. Members wish to speak. There is the issue of suffering that can be labelled substantial. Where there is a likelihood of that, any application should go automatically to the new advisory committee—or, at the very least, to outside assessors. As I understand the Bill, that could happen; I believe that it should be mandatory on the Home Secretary so to refer it and not to leave it to the Home Office inspector and then a rubber stamp by the Home Secretary.

In the code of practice there should be a requirement that at all times alternatives should be sought. I understand that, under the Bill, that may be one of the conditions attached to a licence. No experiment should be allowed unless those making the application have definitely investigated whether there is a possible alternative. I hope that that provision may be strengthened in Committee.

I also hope that the methods of killing which are set out in an appendix to the Bill will be looked at again and expert veterinary advice taken, because I am not sure that they are absolutely right and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary would wish to see that the best professional advice is given in setting out what methods of euthanasia are to be employed with these animals.

Will my hon. Friend clarify the position about registered breeders and suppliers of laboratory animals when he replies? Will animals be specially bred for the purpose, something which the RSPCA is particularly keen on, and which would definitely cut out the possibility of stolen pets being used? Unless that is the case, it would presumably be possible for stolen animals to find their way to a registered breeder or supplier.

There were some ill-judged criticisms of the new advisory committee. I know several welfare members of the existing advisory committee. They have assured me that they are not drawn up in serried ranks of welfarists and scientists in opposition to one another. They work together as individuals. The personal testimony of people such as Dr. Judith Hampson from the RSPCA and Mr. Clive Hollands, whose name has also been mentioned several times, is that that is a useful and worthwhile committee which is looking at the interests of animals and furthering that. I see no reason why the new committee should not do an equally, if not better, job.

One gap in the Bill worries me. It is wrong that the Bill does not provide for compulsory animal welfare training for those who will carry out experiments, whether the scientific people of the top rank or the technicians, before they are allowed to do so.

I see that fees are to be incorporated in the applications. I see no reason why those fees, instead of going into the greedy jaws of the Treasury, should not be diverted for the running of training courses. I urge my hon. Friend to look closely at that aspect of the matter because there is no way in which policing, however good, can entirely replace the commitment of those engaged in experiments day by day. If they are taught to have a far greater respect and concern for animals that will do more good than any number of Home Office inspectors. That is a point on which I want to lay considerable stress tonight.

The issue of experiment duplication has been raised. I appreciate the practical dificulties, but I hope that it will be possible in the new set-up to try to ensure that duplication does not take place. Perhaps it could be a condition of the licence that the licensee should have searched around to see whether there was any relevant experience that could be used without duplicating the experiment. I put that forward for my hon. Friend's consideration.

Will the code of practice be along the lines of the "Highway Code" or is it of some other legal significance? So much will depend on what goes into that code of practice that it is important that we know precisely where we stand on that point.

There has been criticism of the Bill on the ground that the title—Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill—is not especially clear to the general public. Why is it not possible to have a title that more adequately reflects what we are seeking to do? We are concerned with the welfare of animals used in scientific experiments. I suggest that the Bill's title should more adequately represent its purposes.

It will be apparent that, although I am disappointed about the scope of the Bill, I believe that it provides a reasonable framework and that, given determination by successive Secretaries of State, there will be an improvement in the lot of animals. It is in that spirit that I welcome the Bill and hope that it is given a Second Reading.

11.20 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): I have been involved with animal welfare all my life. I must declare an interest in that I have three West Highland terriers, named Tammy Hansard, Speaker Hansard and Ben Hansard.

I am a member of the executive of the Campaign for the Reform of Animal Experimentation. I should like to add my tribute to Lord Houghton for his tremendous work over so many years. It has been a privilege to serve under his wise and steady leadership.

No hon. Member looks forward more than I do to the day when animals are no longer used in experiments for so-called scientific purposes. In the past 110 years, tens of millions of animals have suffered and died. It is a

disgrace that animal welfare in general and the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 in particular have been untouched for so long.

Hon. Members have asked whether the Bill goes far enough. Many wish that it would go considerably further. Those of us who have the opportunity to serve on the Standing Committee will want to look in great detail at a number of issues to ascertain whether it will be possible to strengthen the Bill, especially in relation to the LD50 test, the Draize eye test and other tests. All hon. Members should ask themselves when deciding how to vote on Second Reading whether the Bill will lead to a reduction in the number of animals used in experiments. There can be doubt that the legislation will not move quickly enough but I am confident that, even if it is not strengthened in Committee, as I hope it will be, there is a strong chance that, within 10 years, the number of experiments will have been reduced by up to 50 per cent.

There is no doubt that the Bill will greatly strengthen research into alternatives. It will increase public awareness which, in turn, will put further pressure on those who would look for further alternatives. It will mean greater parliamentary accountability, as there will be many more opportunities for hon. Members in this Parliament and in Parliaments to come to question Home Office Ministers and to discuss the Bill's operations and effects. In those areas the Bill is really breaking new ground.

The introduction of a new form of individual project licence, compared with licences for individuals carrying out research must have an excellent long term effect. The controls on premises in which experiments take place and the controls on breeding establishments will all lead us down the path of helping to reduce the number of experiments. When the Bill becomes an Act, it will put tremendous responsibility on the Home Secretary and the Ministers at the Home Office. They will have to ensure that the letter of the Act, as it will then be, and the spirit behind it are fully operated.

I briefly want to refer to the mobilisation group. I know that many members of the mobilisation group are sincere and dedicated in their wish to reduce suffering to animals. However, it is being unrealistic in saying to hon. Members and the country that unless all its objectives can be achieved overnight there should be no changes. I think that that would be a disaster because we know that there is no prospect whatsoever of a Bill which will stop all experiments overnight becoming law in this Parliamentary Session or in any foreseeable Parliamentary Session. I understand and respect the sincerity of the mobilisation group, but I believe that its tactics are wrong.

I totally condemn the extremist groups which go way beyond the mobilisation group and are prepared to use violence. The actions of such groups will, sooner or later, lead to the death of individuals because they are much more concerned with creating anarchy and chaos than helping animals. I hope that everyone in the House will totally disassociate themselves from that complete lunatic, extremist and anarchist fringe.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that many of us who are staying for the debate realise that we will be defeated? We want the caution to be put on record that we profoundly believe that a great deal more has to be done. We want to place that clearly on the record for everyone to know.

Mr. Bowden: Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the right of every hon. Member when he catches your eye, to put matters on the record. That is what hon. Members on both sides of the House have been doing. That was not my point. I was talking about the groups that want to destroy democracy and cause anarchy and chaos and use methods of violence. That does not refer to the hon. Gentleman or anybody who has spoken in the debate, so I am afraid that I do not understand his point. There has been an opportunity for all points of view to be expressed.

I think that my final point provides a warning to Parliament. The MORI poll in 1984 centred on the moral issue of this subject. I think it is significant that 53 per cent. of the people asked thought that it was morally wrong to kill or cause pain to animals in any sort of experiment and only 36 per cent. said that it was morally right. I shall not comment further on those figures, but it is something that Parliament must not ignore. The House, through the Home Office, will have a vital role in ensuring that when the Bill beomes an Act, it operates effectively and leads to a progressive reduction in all types of experiment on animals.

11.29 pm

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton): The Bill and its associated guidelines break new ground in requiring the Secretary of State and his inspectorate to award an individual project licence for each experiment, which imposes specific conditions on the licence holder and requires each experiment to be justified. That is in addition to the present requirement that all individuals carrying out research work should be the holder of a personal licence granted by the Secretary of State.

The Bill also controls the premises on which procedures are carried out and includes for the first time the breeding and supply establishments. This point has been raised many times in the debate. I should like to bury the myth that there are body snatchers who collect pets from the streets to experiment on them, because most of the experimentation is done on specially bred animals, because they have to be disease-free, and their breeding and pedigree have to be right for the job to be done correctly. Therefore, it is a myth that there are people going around collecting granny's pet cat or Uncle Bob's little dog. It does not happen in this day and age. Experimentation is an expensive process, and to obtain correct results the right animal has to be used. Such animals are specially bred. I welcome the provision in the Bill that those establishments should be licensed.

The Bill also establishes a new statutory animal procedures committee to advise the Secretary of State. Many hon. Members have commented on the make-up of that committee.

In seeking to bring up to date the law on animal experimentation, the Bill has widespread support and strikes the necessary balance to ensure that the welfare of animals used in experiments is safeguarded, while it ensures that necessary research for the health, welfare and safety of people living in the United Kingdom can continue.

Research benefits not only human beings but other animals, including domestic pets, farm animals and bloodstock. The need for continuing medical and pharmaceutical research is obvious. Many hon. Members have spoken of the medicines that have been developed to control, for example, epilepsy, asthma and diabetes.

[Mrs. Ann Winterton]

Vaccines can now prevent polio and diphtheria. Smallpox has been wiped out. Medicines can treat many heart diseases and cancers, not only prolonging life and controlling pain, but improving the quality of what little life is left to those who are suffering from terminal illness.

All that could not have been achieved without research on animals. Furthermore, any potential new medicine must be tested to see whether it is likely to work on human patients and to ascertain whether any serious risks to patients could be predicted. The Medicines Act 1968 demands that adequate safety testing be conducted on animals; for example, nearly 90 per cent. of ICI's usage of animals is for medicines research and safety testing, the remainder being for other consumer and industrial chemicals, which is also demanded by the law. The minimum number of animals is used, and since 1977 ICI has achieved a reduction of 50 per cent. in the numbers used. That is a notable fact, because it is despite an increase in the amount of research and safety testing.

Nationally, I believe that the number of experiments has come down from 5·5 million in the mid-1970s to 300 million last year——

Dr. M. S. Miller: It is 3·5 million.

Mrs. Winterton: The hon. Gentleman corrects me—it was 3·5 million last year.

That reduction in the number of experiments is very much to be welcomed, but they can never be wiped out. There must always be some experimentation on animals because there is no possible alternative. Although much money is being put into research into viable alternatives, at the end of the day there will always need to be experimentation on animals.

As a result of the Bill, if it passes through the House, there will be an increase in the number of experiments reported in Government statistics because of the different way of collating those statistics. As a result of the further safeguards in the Bill, there will be a need for the inspectorate to be strengthened. I welcome the announcement that apparently six more inspectors are to be appointed fairly soon. Much will rest on the shoulders of the inspectors, who must interpret the intentions laid down in the Bill, with the help of the notes for guidance and the codes of practice.

I represent a constituency in which the employees of four major pharmaceutical companies live and where the chemical industry is an important employer. Some of my constituents work at ICI at Alderley Park, some at Fisons at Holmes Chapel, some for Wellcome at Crewe Hall, and some for Ciba Geigy at Wilmslow. Knowing that the legislation would come before the House, I inspected all of the animal laboratories in which my constituents work. I assure the House that the animals which I saw that are being experimented upon are kept in the most controlled conditions and are extremely well cared for. I praise the young technicians who look after those animals, who have their best interests at heart and who are caring people. Often they get a bad press, and it should be put on the record that they do a splendid job.

I have no hesitation in supporting the Bill wholeheartedly, for the simple reason that it is an eminently reasonable measure which balances the proven need for continued research to benefit man and animals with the need to have sensible safeguards for the welfare of the animals that are involved in experimentation.

11.36 pm

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Listening to the debate for four hours has demonstrated to me that it is not a party political issue. In commending the Secretary of State and the Minister on introducing the Bill, may I say that clearly hon. Members on both sides of the House take different views from those prevailing in their parties. Any Bill that can bring into the same camp the right hon. Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) does a remarkable service to the processes of the House.

I had expected to agree with the speech of the hon. Member for Leyton much more than I did, and in some respects, his speech was counterproductive. He portrayed the failing which in such issues it is difficult to avoid, and that is stating a subjective view as though it was an objective fact. It is extremely difficult to get away from stating what one believes firmly is one's opinion as though it was a scientifically proved fact. I do not believe that any hon. Member would wish to do other than to minimise the experiments that are conducted on animals, and I do not believe that anyone who takes part in the debate has an ulterior motive. It is crucial to accept people's bona fides.

The question to be asked in the debate is, where do we draw the line? I agree with almost all the arguments of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes), but I would come to a different conclusion on what the Bill will do and, therefore, what I shall do in the Lobby tonight, if there is a Division.

There is no doubt that a minority of people believe that humans have no right to use any animals for any research. I respect that view. Indeed, many of those people carry their beliefs into what they eat and wear. But it is a minority view, and I reject it, because I cannot accept such an absolute view. It is difficult to sustain logically. For example, although the hon. Member for Leyton opposes hunting for genuine principles, he would allow fishing. We cannot determine whether fish feel pain, any more than we can determine whether any animal feels pain intrinsically. It is impossible to maintain the principle consistently, and it is interesting to note that such differences appeared on both sides of the debate.

There is a hierarchy of response from animals, and sometimes there is a problem, taking the anthromorphic view of the matter, of trying to put oneself in the place of animals to determine the mental consciousness of an animal as though it were a human. It is difficult to do that. However, the difficulty that must be faced—I accept that the Minister and those who introduced the Bill faced it conscientiously—is that, because as humans we have power, we hold the animal world in trust and have a sensitive responsibility to exercise that trust with great care. In some cases, and with strict safeguards, experiments are valid.

The majority of the people interested in animal welfare oppose the Bill. I do not agree with the hon. Member for Poole (Mr. Ward), who said that the animal welfare lobbies will never be satisfied until all experiments are done away with. My experience from talking to the people who came to give their views on the Bill was that they looked forward to the White Paper and the Bill, hoping that it would improve the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876.

It is their opinion—it is one of which I am persuaded—that although there was a need for further legislation, the Bill has not materially improved that Act with regard to the protection of animals. That is why those people are disappointed with the Bill. They believe that it does not go far enough towards protecting and providing safeguards for animals.

There is one aspect of this matter which goes through all our medicine and our view of it. It is that too much emphasis is placed on curative rather than preventive medicine. All the experiments are to do with cure rather than prevention. If many of the resources that are devoted to cure were devoted to prevention, the need to use animals in experiments would be minimised. Such an approach would be an advantage.

I agree with the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who intervened and took an early bath in this debate. He said that he did not believe that the Bill would reduce the number of experiments. One of the key features is that the Bill fails to stress the need to search for alternatives to animal research. The Bill dodges that point. The nub of the Bill may be where it says that no licence will be given unless no animal can be substituted for the higher animals listed in the clause. If the clause provided that the licence should not be given unless there was no substitute—not necessarily animal—it would have been far more acceptable and would have put the emphasis where it should lie. The Bill does not do that.

We should study the alternatives, some of which have been mentioned. I accept the expertise of the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller), but there is a contrary view which suggests that more experiments could effectively be done on human tissue.

Mr. Mellor: I should not want the hon. Gentleman to be under any illusions, because when applying for a project licence all applicants will have to declare that they have considered alternatives to the use of live animals and have rejected them on good grounds. There is a new power for us to say that we are not satisfied that the applicants have properly considered the alternatives or we believe that an alternative to the use of live animals exists, and a project licence will not be granted however competent the applicants may otherwise seem to be.

Mr. Meadowcroft: I am grateful to the Minister, but I should like to know whether the view he has expressed will be given the force of law and will be included in the Bill. Perhaps the Minister can deal what that point when he replies. That is the crucial point. It is no good saying that that is the intention—there may be a code of conduct—because the Bill does not say that.

A further point about alternatives is important. It has been said by experts that the use of human tissue culture could have predicted the results of thalidomide. That is perhaps something that should be studied carefully. Those who seek alternatives suggest that if we were interested in providing the means for microvascular surgery practice and in perfecting that technique, the use of human placenta, which is usually discarded, could provide an opportunity. The use of quantum pharmacology to predict the harmful effect of drugs could be emphasised more. Some hon. Members have mentioned the possibility of using more computer simulation of the effects of drugs. Those are all matters that could have been made the Bill's main emphasis.

Another objection which has been prayed and which I accept is that the subject of the repetition of experiments has not been spelt out adequately. It is one of the features of the Bill which is less favourable to the protection of animals than the 1876 Act. There is a problem which the Minister will find difficult to redress in Committee if the Bill receives a Second Reading. I refer to cosmetics. Of course cosmetics should be tested if people might suffer disfiguring scars, but whereas the large majority of people would accept the need for animal experimentation to try to find cures for some desperate human illnesses, they would consider that need less imperative when it comes to cosmetics. That should be addressed far more.

I find it repugnant that using animals to test wounding by weapons is not outlawed by the Bill. My noble Friend Lord Airedale moved an amendment to that end in another place on 12 December, but it was not proceeded with and the Minister put the case for continuing with such testing.

This is a desperately emotive subject and hon. Members have rightly put their cases quite emotionally. I would find many aspects of experimentation repugnant, but that is not a basis for legislation. I might not want to benefit from much of the research, but the question is whether I should deny others the benefit of it. It is not possible to take an absolute stance. It is a matter of balance and judgment. My judgment is that the Bill is inadequate. If it receives a Second Reading, I hope that it is substantially amended in Committee, but I doubt it. I have read carefully the *Official Report* of another place. My noble Friends there proposed 18 amendments, but they were not proceeded with. However strenuously we try to improve the Bill, it will remain defective in many respects, so I hope that my hon. Friends will vote against it.

11.46 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Much earlier in the evening, the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) mentioned an early-day motion, to which an amendment has been tabled. He also mentioned an amendment to the motion before us. At the risk of taking a little of the House's time, I think that it is important to answer some of the questions that have been asked.

I should like, first, to put the early-day motion and the amendment to it on the record. The early-day motion reads:

"That this House rejects the Government's Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill as totally inadequate to protect animals from unnecessary experiments that are known to be taking place in British laboratories; and calls for any legislation which replaces the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 to include the following basic minimum requirements: *(a)* a ban on cosmetic, tobacco and alcohol experiments, *(b)* a ban on the Draize eye irritancy test, *(c)* a ban on the L.D.50 poisoning test, *(d)* a ban on behavioural-psychological experiments, and *(e)* a ban on warfare experiments and the reconstitution of the Home Secretary's Advisory Committee on Animal Experimentation, to exclude those who have a vested interest in the continuation of animal experiments."

The amendment, which was tabled in my name and those of members of the all-party parliamentary group for FRAME and others, reads:

"this House welcomes the Government's Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*; congratulates the Home Office on introducing long-overdue legislation that will both meet immediate needs and permit the replacement of all animals used in scientific experiments as this, through research, becomes possible; notes that the Bill had wide all-party support during its passage through the House of Lords and believes that there would be no morality whatsoever in any legislation that led to the unilateral banning, in the United Kingdom, of research which

[Mr. Roger Gale]

would then certainly be carried out under less satisfactory controls, and with greater harm to animals, in other parts of the world."

The early-day motion and the amendment epitomise the argument. I doubt whether any hon. Member who has been in the Chamber today does not want an end to all animal experiments. The debate is about how to achieve that end, and how to achieve it worldwide. The hon. Member for Leyton has a sincerely held view. He has tabled an early-day motion, an amendment to the Second Reading motion and introduced a Bill under the 10-minute Bill procedure. However, I believe that he is wrong. I do not share his views.

I respect also the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), even though I do not share all of them.

The motion is based on the demands by Mobilisation for laboratory animals. Mobilisation says:

"In our view there can be no ethical justification for exposing any sentient and unconsenting individual to suffering, or risk of suffering, when the only benefit would be to others."

In other words, Mobilisation would ban research completely. In doing so it would ban research, and the results of that research, into cancer, continuing research into Parkinson's disease, research into senile dementia, which was referred to by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), research into AIDS, which was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and countless other pieces of medical research that are designed to benefit human beings. I believe that these programmes are important.

I shall answer as quickly as I possibly can Mobilisation's queries—I can put it no higher than that —about the Bill. I intend to deal first with cosmetics. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said that only one half of 1 per cent. of all animals used in experiments are used in cosmetic experimentation. That figure is correct, but one experiment is one too many if it is unnecessary. Cosmetics are an emotive issue. It is important for the House to understand that we are referring not just to lipstick and eyeshadow. I ran quickly through a shopping list of the kind of cosmetics that a man uses during the course of one day. They include toothpaste, mouthwash, soap, shampoo and conditioner, shaving soap, an antiseptic pencil, perhaps, deodorant, hair dressing, aftershave, detergent and other household goods. All of these products are tested upon animals. To those products can be added the gum on the back of envelopes. That is also a tested product.

Would any hon. Member or any member of the public go to a store and buy a product that was labelled, "This product has not been properly tested"? I discussed this subject with a manufacturer of household goods. He informed me that his company, which I shall not name, had been testing a shampoo on live rabbits three years ago. They did no more than shampoo the rabbits, which in due course gave birth to malformed progeny. It is not altogether surprising that that product development was dropped there and then. I should like to know which right hon. or hon. Member would be prepared to subject his or her children to that kind of untested product.

The thalidomide case is often wrongly quoted. It is said, "But testing did not prevent thalidomide, did it?" No, it did not, because until the thalidomide case, products were not tested on pregnant mammals. As a result of the thalidomide case, they now are.

The other argument is that there are already enough products on the market. During the last 20 years the cosmetic side of the industry has developed fluoride toothpaste, which in some areas has reduced the incidence of caries by up to 50 per cent. Sunscreens, including those which are incorporated in all National Health Service approved camouflage creams, non-irritant vaginal anti-perspirants, anti-dandruff shampoo and anti-plaque agents are all cosmetic.

I suggest that those products will be developed either in the United Kingdom or elsewhere. I would prefer those products to be developed in this country, under the stringent controls that we apply, rather than elsewhere under less stringent controls. That is why our early-day motion says:

"There would be no morality whatsoever in any legislation that led to the unilateral banning in the United Kingdom of research which would then certainly be carried out under less satisfactory controls, and with greater harm to animals, in other parts of the world."

Mobilisation refers to the Draize eye test. Much work has been done on acceptable alternatives, which work is now well advanced. It is likely that the Draize eye test will be obsolete in the foreseeable future. The legislation that is before the House tonight takes account of that. As and when the Draize eye test becomes fully obsolete, the Secretary of State will be able to introduce regulations against it.

Many of the potential causes of eye injury are now determined from databank information. The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) asked why more databank information could not be used. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State made available a sum of money through FRAME in the middle of last year to establish three programmes, one of which was to set up a databank for exactly that purpose, to obviate yet more unnecessary animal experiments. The doses used in the Draize eye test were chosen to produce mild responses. I have given one of the results produced from experimentation with shampoo.

Another argument used is that there are products on the market that have not been tested on animals. But are there? We do not usually produce exhibits in the House, but I have to do so in order to read the label. It is a product labelled, "Peach conditioning Cream Shampoo, Pure plant products." On the cap is a red sticker which says, "Produced without cruelty to animals." If analysed, the product would, I believe, be found to contain amine alkyl sulphate, which is a synthetic surfactant material, ethylene glycol monosterate, and ethylene glycol distearate. These ingredients are not of pure plant origin, and they have been tested on animals.

I am sure that the manufacturers of that shampoo made their claim in good faith but that the shampoo itself has not been tested on live animals. I do not know of a product containing detergent that has not at some point been tested on live animals, and I challenge anybody on the Government or on the Opposition Benches to produce such a product. There is an organisation called Beauty without Cruelty which claims to be able to purvey such products. I would like to see one, and I would have the product analysed to find out what was in it. I have given the House the results of one such analysis.

The LD50 test has also been mentioned. Should we ban the LD50 test, or the LD49, or the LD48, or should we ban toxicity testing altogether? In asking for a ban on the LD50 test, that is what one is asking for. Hon. Members have mentioned the difference between drugs and cosmetics, and some hon. Members have sought to distinguish between the rightness and wrongness of experimenting for the purpose of creating life saving drugs and for the purpose of creating cosmetics.

Sir Dudley Smith: I am listening with great interest to what my hon. Friend is saying, and I support what he says. Is he aware that over the years a number of pharmaceutical researchers have discovered excellent drugs which had the potential to be great lifesavers, but because of their toxicity they had to be abandoned, and the only possible way they could be tested was by animal experimentation?

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend is right about drugs and what he says also applies to household goods and ordinary cosmetics. If toxic, an ordinary lipstick left around the house could be eaten by a child. At present there are no adequate test tube toxicity tests. Organisations like the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments, Mobilisation and other organisations are working towards that end.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare has proposed that

"A project licence shall not be granted for the purpose of ascertaining the lethal dose which kills 50 per cent. (or some other percentage) of the subject animals."

In effect, that means no toxicity testing. It is generally accepted that the traditional LD50 test is of some value. I had a meeting with representatives of Mobilisation last week. Significantly, no amendment to this portion of the Bill was introduced in another place, and that could well be because one is difficult to devise. I have asked Mobilisation if it can draft an amendment for the Committee stage of the Bill. If it does so, I would like to consider it carefully. The Minister has considered every other submission very carefully and I do not doubt that he would be equally prepared to consider such an amendment.

If Mobilisation does that, it will have to take into account a number of regulations. Article 2 of Council directive 76/768/EEC, and regulation 5 of the Cosmetic Products (Safety) Regulations 1984 provide that cosmetic products, which include toiletries, protective and decorative cosmetics and perfumes, put on the market within the EEC must not be liable to cause damage to human health when applied under normal conditions of use. Directives 78/45/EEC and 85/374/EEC say the same, and directive 79/831/EEC requires producers to test all new substances. One can add to that list regulations under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and those of the Committee on Safety of Medicines, the World Health Organisation and various other bodies. Before Mobilisation comes up with an amendment, it will have to satisfy all those national and international regulations.

Behavioural and psychological experiments have been mentioned. The International Fund for Animal Welfare says:

"A project licence should not be granted for behavioural studies designed to reveal information not for use in the treatment of disease in human beings".

The fund at least recognises some uses; for example, in the development of treatment for schizophrenia, for geriatric medicine, and for senile dementia, but it does not recognise the potential use in animal medicine.

Many hon. Members have expressed worry about aversion stimuli, deprivation and aggression tests. We recognise that there is a need for reform in that area, but the nature of the Bill allows us to study that and allows the Secretary of State to legislate thereafter.

The hon. Member for Houghton and Washington referred to warfare experiments. I have visited Porton Down, and I saw many of the experiments taking place there. Between 1980 and 1984 a total of 190 animals were used in wounding experiments. I know of no beagles being used at Porton Down. I know of beagles that are bred there and supplied to the DHSS for drug testing.

As far as I am aware, no weapons testing of any kind is carried out at Porton Down. I and those who came with me to view the establishment were given as free a run of the place as may be had outside sterile laboratory conditions, and when we were not able to enter premises we were, wherever possible, able to view the laboratories through windows. While I and, no doubt, many other hon. Members do not like this aspect of the work, the research carried out on behalf of our armed forces is every bit as legitimate medical research as is any other programme carried out in any laboratory in this or any other country.

Mobilisation says that the Home Secretary's advisory committee should comprise:

"Persons who, whilst having knowledge of the subject . . . have no vested interest whatsoever in the use of animals for research purposes . . . Only if the committee is constituted fairly will there be any chance of reasonable recommendations being made for the benefit of laboratory animals".

Fair composition? That would rule out Dr. Michael Balls, the chairman of the trustees of FRAME, who has contributed so much to the Bill, but who, like most medical practitioners, has carried out animal experimentation. Is it right that people with experience should be excluded from serving on the committee? That is exactly the sort of person that we need on the committee.

No Bill is perfect, and amendments will be tabled to this measure. Mobilisation says:

"After strong representation from animal rights groups the Government now proposes to forbid the re-use of animals . . . however, the issue of re-use may well re-surface because of strong pro-vivisection interests".

I shall not propose an amendment to permit the re-use of animals, but I should like to know why Mobilisation, my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point or anyone else wishes to condemn yet more animals to death when some could be re-used and thus save others. Perhaps when they have thought about that, they, rather than I, might like to table an amendment.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) and others who have referred to the fact that a project licence will not be granted unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that full consideration has been given to all the alternatives, and that the use of animals is the only viable way to achieve the necessary purpose. I hope and believe that my hon. Friend the Minister will consider that, and accept an amendment to the Bill.

FRAME seeks alternatives that will obviate the need for all animal experiments world wide. In the interim, the Bill will result in the immediate strengthening of the controls, as all use of laboratory animals will have to be justified.

[Mr. Gale]

It will provide a basis for continuing reform in the years to come, without the need for further legislation. That is why, in the early-day motion, we say that this is a Bill that

"will both meet immediate needs and permit the replacement of all animals used in scientific experiments as this, through research, becomes possible".

That is why, together with the British Veterinary Association, the Committee for the reform of Animal Experimentation and now hon. Members of all parties in the other place, we wholeheartedly support the Bill.

12.5 am

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): It has been said by several hon. Members on both sides of the House that the real test of the efficacy of the Bill is whether fewer animals are used after its passage than are used now, and whether those animals that are used are not caused unnecessary suffering.

I have listened with interest to what has so far been a patchy debate. At the end of it, I cannot help being immensely disappointed that after 100 years absence of any reform of the 1876 Act, we are still disputing whether the Bill will reduce the number of experiments. There has been a statement by the director of the Research Defence Society that he cannot think of one experiment that is permitted before the Bill that will not be permitted after it has become law. That is challengeable, but it is regrettable that, having got this far, and with such a great delay since the last substantive legislation, we are still arguing whether there will be a material difference in the number of animals experimented on.

I cannot think of any other endeavour where so little progress would be so widely accepted in the extraordinary bipartisan atmosphere that we have seen tonight. I trust that hon. Members will accept that some of the reservations about the Bill are equally felt on both sides of the House. We have had some distinguished speeches, particularly that from my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), bearing this out. I am disappointed and frustrated that some exceptionally cruel and disgusting tests have been used in animal experimentation that, from all the evidence that a lay person can adduce, no longer even retain any scientific credibility, but the Bill will permit at least their technical continuance.

FRAME has been quoted often this evening, and I have the greatest possible respect for it. It has said of the Draize eye test—rather contrary to what the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) implied, although I would not seek to contradict him as he is a doctor—that it is not the case that culture and other tests are always necessarily less effective and useful than those performed on animals. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that there must be a certain number of experiments, at least at this stage of development, that must be performed on animals. I hope that we avoid the assumption that any of us that speak expecting rather more of the Bill than we have got, would necessarily have bought the whole anti-vivisectionist mobilisation bandwagon, because we have not.

FRAME has said:

"There is no need for animals to be exposed to chemicals likely to cause severe reactions . . . Within the foreseeable future, the Draize eye irritancy test will be discontinued since it will have become unnecessary."

Dr. M. S. Miller: I agree with that comment. FRAME is a worthwhile organisation. The hon. Member for Oxford, east (Mr. Norris) criticises the Bill. My opinion was clear. I said that we should ensure that human beings are not at risk. The Bill is not intended to do what the hon. Gentleman says that it should do. The Bill is not called the "Animal Welfare Bill".

Mr. Norris: There is a difference between the view which the hon. Gentleman expressed in his speech, to which I listened with interest, and the views which all hon. Members have expressed, whether in favour of or against the proposals. None of us suggests that human values should be set aside while we consider animal welfare.

My argument is that outmoded and scientifically unsupportable tests have no impact upon medical science for human beings. They are discredited tests. FRAME, which is highly respected and has views which are not to be set aside, says that the Draize eye test will be discontinued since it has become unnecessary.

That test will be discontinued more speedily if the Bill contains a prohibition. I can extend that argument to the LD50 test. FRAME states:

"The classical or formal LD50 procedure is now widely regarded by toxicologists as unscientific and unnecessarily wasteful of animal lives."

That cannot be more clear. FRAME continues:

"This is another area where progress in the development of alternatives can be expected."

Most of us would agree that that is desirable.

There is the greatest possible difference between drawing, in a technical sense, a distinction between lethal dosage and therapeutic dosage in relation to cancer drugs and the testing which I, as an instinctive vivisectionist, recognise is necessary in this vital research. However, does that mean conducting tests which deliberately require the death of a proportion of the subject animals for no better reason than that that is contained in the small print of the LD50 test?

Mr. Mellor: My hon. Friend is being analytical. The difference is not as great as he suggests. The Bill will permit the Secretary of State, through the inspectorate and such other authorities as he might wish to call upon, to take an individual view on the merits of each application. We cannot say now that there will never be a need to test a substance on an animal's eye. We can say that there are ways of operating the Draize test which cause the minimum of suffering which should be employed in every case. The advanced work on non-animal alternatives means that in a few years we shall not need the Draize test. The purpose of the project licence is that when that time comes the Draize test will not be permitted because the project licence allows for best practice to become common practice.

The LD50 test is a whole package of tests, and it is the crude LD50 test to which we and my hon. Friend object. That will not be permitted under the project licence mechanism, other than in an exceptional case where it really is necessary to know the classic LD50 rating. Again, because it is a complicated area and no one can say at this stage of the game that we do not need to know the toxicity ratings of certain substances — for example, agrochemicals where any amount might be ingested by a farm labourer during his work, or cancer drugs — it would be contrary to the public interest to say, "Stop the

LD50 test." It is better to say, "Let us purge it gradually out of the system by taking a proper, careful, balanced, individual view on the merits of each test."

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention.

I had hoped that I would make only a few short remarks. I want to deal with the defence that has been adumbrated on previous occasions, that the discretion given to the Minister to approve each individual experiment overtakes the desirability of banning certain of the outmoded tests.

I understand and have great sympathy with my hon. Friend's argument. In a great many cases, the procedure will prove invaluable. I wish to take this opportunity to join in what is not a chorus, but a genuine concert of congratulation to my hon. Friend for what he has managed to achieve. Those of us who may feel frustration at so little progress after a century of neglect, in no sense direct that frustration at him.

On the crude LD50 test, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) suggested that the wording of his amendment to the early-day motion referred to the almost immorality of banning LD50 in this country but permitting it to occur overseas. The theme of his remarks was that it would be immoral for us to ban the LD50 test — even though it has been wholly scientifically discredited — because all we would do would be to export the problem. That is a superficially attractive argument and logic, but no more than that. My hon. Friend suggests that we would make no progress in the standards on animal experimentation until the standards adopted by the least tolerable of our European partners were to match our own. Surely what we in the United Kingdom would be doing was setting exemplary standards and then requiring our European partners to adopt them. That might be one useful way in which the Community, for once in its incessant clamour for harmonisation, might be useful.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend is well aware of my belief that if experiments are to be carried out at all, they are better carried out under regulations in this country than elsewhere. The real objective that we all pursue is the obviation of all animal experiments by the provision of alternatives. Until those alternatives are available, I believe—as I know he believes—that it is better to have the experiments carried out here than anywhere else.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend must not put words into my mouth. He is saying exactly what I am not saying. It is not an adequate line of logic to say that because the experiments might be carried out in other countries if they were not carried out here, we should continue to carry them out because we are the good guys and we cannot export the moral dilemma and thus rid ourselves of it. I do not seek to rid myself of the moral dilemma at the expense of a third party. I am merely suggesting that, unfortunately, the logic of that argument is that we do nothing until everybody else's standards begin to approach our own. That is not acceptable to me. We should be prepared to be exemplary, to be first and to be the best. That is the way in which in the long term we shall achieve significant progress.

I am similarly disappointed that we cannot go further on research into tobacco and alcohol addiction. Those are linked by the fact that they are self-induced conditions. I hope that I shall not fall into the trap of suggesting some sort of moral opprobrium, but I defy a medical expert to prove to me that significant areas remain to be investigated which have not already been flogged to death.

Surely the same goes for experiments into cosmetics. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North makes much of the fact that he has a bottle of shampoo that is said not to be harmful to animals but in fact contains all sorts of things which sound as though I would expect to find them in my antifreeze. That is a plausible line, but it does not run contrary to the line that I would prefer to take.

Those of us who are concerned about unnecessary experimentation are simply saying—to put it as crudely and straightforwardly as it strikes me—that we surely have enough lipsticks, creams and unguents to cover the medico-social reasons for cosmetics for disfigurations mentioned by the hon. Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller).

We cannot honestly say that we need more research to test yet more products. I hope that it does not sound too heretical coming from the Conservative Benches to say that we are simply offering companies a range of products from which to make money. Let them make money by producing products from ingredients that have already been tested and on which there need be no further unnecessary testing.

Sir Dudley Smith: Will my hon. Friend extend that to household products such as oven cleaners and other items which are potentially lethal where new discoveries are being made all the time to improve the running of households? Surely they all need to be tested.

Mr. Norris: I am not persuaded. I accept that that is an extremely unpopular and non-intellectual view. No doubt I am missing some tremendously powerful stream of logic which so far defeated me, and I apologise for that. But I do not put a new improved oven cleaner stick before the desirability of abolishing one area of animal experimentation. Is that so awful? I do not know. Perhaps it is. However, there must be a point, which I suspect most people recognise, at which we say that we have gone far enough and we have the appliances that we need. Without some major area of new endeavour we have gone far enough. There is no justification for continued experimentation.

Finally, let me say that it has been said by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary that none of these bans are necessary because the Secretary of State has been given power to control each experiment and experimenter. However, we in our legislation have never told a Secretary of State that he knows roughly what we want, outlined the general principle and left it to him to get on with the business of interpreting that. We are not prepared to make such an assumption in other legislation as far as I can gather from my limited experience. Rather, it is the tradition of the House to dot as many i's and cross as many t's as possible and that we reserve to Secretaries of State, however, distinguished they may be—and this one is as distinguished, if not more so, than his colleagues—only those matters which have to be determined on discretion at the time. That is not necessarily the case in every experiment to be covered by the Bill.

May I just say finally——

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): My grandmother died at the early age of 36. For a number of years, my father was research secretary to the British Tuberculosis Association.

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

I suspect that he and his contemporaries would not have discovered a cure for TB if they had not been able to experiment on animals. I suspect that they would not have been able to find a cure for TB if they had been forced to dot every i and cross every t. A balance must be struck. Does my hon. Friend not feel that the Bill strikes the best balance to ensure that the grandmothers of other people do not die at the early age of 36?

Mr. Norris: Both my maternal grandparents died from the same condition. I think that every hon. Member appreciates the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry). However, if he had followed what I was saying, he would have known that I was talking about the Draize and LD50 tests, cosmetic and kitchen equipment experiments and experiments concerned with tobacco, alcohol, and so on. I was not referring to the sort of experiments about which my hon. Friend speaks. I am grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to make that clear. I am sure that there is great agreement on both sides of the House on that point.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Norris: I should prefer to finish my speech. I have said "finally" several times and, each time, I have been greeted by greater cheers from the Opposition. If I may say "finally" again — [HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear."] — through the chorus of approval, if we have the technology to dispense with unnecessary suffering and can demonstrate that alternatives are available, let us be prepared to do so in a straightforward declaratory way in the Bill and to demonstrate our desire to move a century forward in alleviating distress to animals. That should be our aim.

12.27 am

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): It is often said that Britain is a nation of animal lovers, yet one has only to consider this debate to see that there are great differences in the definitions of "animal lovers". In Basildon, which I represent, people are concerned about animal protection. However, locally and nationally, one need only go to a dog pound to realise that there is much abuse of animals. That point was emphasised by the figures released today by the RSPCA. Over the years I have kept animals of all kinds, although parliamentary commitments at present limit me to goldfish and doves.

Some people maintain that they prefer animals to people because animals do not answer back. This is at the heart of the issue in assessing the rights of animals commonly referred to as "dumb", although many people would dispute that. Where do we draw the line on the right of human beings to exert their ascendancy over animals?

The groups that seek to safeguard the welfare of animals are increasing in number and fervour. I found them to be an articulate and persuasive lobby during the general election campaign. Most such groups adopt a sensible and constructive approach. However, I utterly condemn those animal welfare groups that use violence to achieve their ends, whether through poisoning food, breaking into laboratories or placing bombs in busy department stores. Such activities have no place in a democratic society. They will not meet with success. They give the animal welfare movement a thoroughly bad name. Reference was made in the debate on this issue in another place to the so-called animal rights extremists who committed violent assaults against laboratories and scientists. The words of Sir William Paton were quoted. He said that they are mostly of the healthiest generation that this country has ever seen because of past medical research.

Tonight we are debating the principle behind the Bill first introduced into the other place. As I understand it, the Bill seeks to strengthen the protection for animals used in experiments, which is something that I certainly applaud. It is a pity that some people have sought to rubbish the Bill without giving it a fair chance, particularly the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock). I think that the Government should be congratulated on having the courage to amend a piece of legislation dealing with animal welfare which has been in existence for 109 years. It is always an emotive subject.

Of course the Bill is not perfect, but then what is? The House of Lords has again demonstrated its worth as a second Chamber by introducing sensible amendments to the Bill. I know that the RSPCA would also like to make some changes to the Bill. However, as the British Veterinary Association, the campaign for the Reform of Animal Experimentation and FRAME have all expressed the view that the Bill represents the effective compromise between the welfare needs of animals, the legitimate demands of the public for accountability and the equally legitimate requirements of medicine, science and commerce. While recognising that there is justifiable public concern over many aspects of laboratory animal use, their view is that the legislation would provide a basis for ensuring that all areas of animal experimentation were effectively controlled.

I particularly welcome the central feature of the Bill — the proposal for a dual licence system. This new system will surely act as a double check against abuse of animal experimentation. I also welcome the fact the requirement of a project licence will mean that the pain, distress and discomfort of the animal will be minimised. For the first time, the likely adverse affects for animals will be weighed against the likely benefit to man or other animals.

I also welcome the fact that for the first time it is proposed that establishments for the breeding and supplying of animals will come under statutory control, so there will be no question of unwanted or stolen pets being used, as my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) said. The requirement under current law to kill all animals which have been allowed to recover from anaesthesia once the experiment is over will also end with the Bill.

In the light of the new legislation, it makes sense to set up an animal procedures committee to advise the Home Secretary on matters of policy and practice, including individual cases referred to it. However, I hope that the Committee will be allowed to use its initiative to press for reductions in animal suffering and usage. I also hope that protection for members of that committee against criminal proceedings for disclosure of other than commercially sensitive material will be given.

I wish that it was not necessary to have any experimentation on animals. I accept the view which is genuinely held by some people, certainly by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), that there is no end which can justify experiments on animals. In fact, some

people would rather die themselves. However, I believe that the vast majority of people believe that the end does justify the means, certainly for finding cures for terminal illnesses.

Mr. Cohen: The hon. Gentleman outlines a view which is not mine. My view is that there are a vast number of unnecessary experiments that should be stopped. We should be looking for alternatives. Certainly the burden of proof to show that experiments are necessary should be shifted to those who want to conduct animal experiments.

Mr. Amess: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for misinterpreting his view. However, he spoke for rather a long time and I was probably lulled into a false sense of security on that point.

All hon. Members will have received a letter from the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee on Cancer Research and surely could not fail to be impressed by its achievements over the past 25 years in improving the survival chances of thousands of cancer sufferers. Children with acute leukaemia or Hodgkins disease have been helped, and lung cancer has been prevented. In Britain alone, cancer counts for one in five of all deaths.

There can be few hon. Members who have not lost someone through cancer, a disease which usually results in the victim losing his very self-respect. We would all wish to find a lasting cure for that terrible disease, yet we are reliably informed that almost all the significant advances in the control of cancer have at some point required experiments including animals—surely a most persuasive argument.

Having received so many cards from constituents about the Draize eye irritancy test, I am encouraged by FRAME's view—although I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) argued the point —that within the foreseeable future the test will be discontinued as it will have become unnecessary. I hope that animal protectionists will welcome the widening of the pain concept to that of severity, and the statutory control of it.

I look forward very much to the day when we no longer have to use animals for scientific purposes, but until then the goal of reducing the number of animals used, minimising the suffering caused to them and replacing them with alternatives wherever possible, and as quickly as possible, can best be served by supporting the Bill.

12.36 am

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): I, too, welcome the Bill. It is long overdue that we update the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 to ensure more humane treatment of laboratory animals in scientific and industrial research. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), I have a large postbag. I imagine that most hon. Members have a larger postbag on this subject throughout the year than on any other single subject. The public support reform, and reform is before the House today.

Furthermore, the Bill is a further fulfilment of the Conservative party manifesto, as pledged in 1983, following two White Papers, in May 1983 and May 1985. After 110 years, although there has been updating by some regulations, there is a need for a new Act. We have a duty to modernise and strengthen the protection given to animals.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said, the Bill strikes a balance between the welfare of animals and the scientific search for genuine solutions to medical problems, all within the umbrella of public accountability.

Animals have helped the fight against disease. For example, childhood deaths from diphtheria have fallen to almost nil from about 800 per million at the turn of the century, as a result of the vaccine. Polio has been mentioned, as well as tuberculosis, and the worldwide eradication of smallpox. Animal diseases have not been mentioned frequently in the debate. Advances have been made in the control of anthrax, canine distemper and foot and mouth disease. Medical advances have been made through animal experimentation.

For the future, controlled reseach on animals may give the much-needed breakthrough for multiple sclerosis arthritis and cancer. Animal experimentation is still required to fight death and disease. However, I am pleased that the number of experiments has fallen in each of the past eight years. The number commenced in 1984 was almost 2 million less than in 1976 and the lowest since 1959. That follows the ability by researchers to adapt their methods so that fewer animals are required. Furthermore, alternative methods have been developed, particularly in the early screening stages of testing new compounds. The culture of cells and tissue in vitra and mathematicl modelling using computers are two such alternatives.

I welcome the Government's decision to support alternatives by a grant to the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments. That principle is right. However, the sum of £150,000 is paltry. In view of the importance of that work, I hope that a minimum sum of £1 million annually can be allocated.

My major worry about the Bill is the extent to which it will permit experiments to continue related to tobacco, alcohol and cosmetics. It is appalling to contemplate that animals are subject to vile abuse to check on products sold to promote human vanity. Why should conscious rabbits continue to have noxious substances dripped into their eyes before the sale of a new shampoo or hairspray? The Draize eye test—a method for evaluating irritancy to the eye—is inaccurate. Alternative methods of testing with cultures give equal, if not better, results. I hope that the Committee will examine whether such tests are still required.

Experiments on animals should be legalised only where no alternatives exist and there is a defined medical purpose. The cosmetics, toiletry and perfumery industries should use human volunteers.

Let us consider alcohol and smoking-related experiments. The rationale for conducting experiments in animals using alcohol is that, ultimately, it will help the alcohol-damaged or alcohol-addicted patient. Hence any suggestion that such research be curtailed is strongly resisted. However, what are we to make of studies into the effects of alcohol on aggression in mice, especially when the mice are confined in narrow tubes and will bite a piece of metal in front of them, or the effects of alcohol on the time that mice spend running round or keeping still? Rats can be made alcohol-dependent by introducing it into their food or drink, and, when alcohol is withdrawn, they become prone to convulsions. Mice from different strains have different preferences for alcohol, but those preferences change when they are made to drink alcohol

[Mr. Conal Gregory]

solutions over a period of time. Rats may have substances introduced directly into the brain to see what effect that has on their alcohol preference.

Alcoholism in the United Kingdom is a serious problem, but, while facilities for detoxification and rehabilitation are still underfunded, the validity and utility of the animal studies described cannot hope to command public confidence.

Tobacco research in animals is an emotive subject, suggesting forced inhalation of tobacco smoke. Such experiments continue, mostly if not exclusively, in rodents to study the effects of smoke on the respiratory tract. Less well known is the expanding research on the nature of smoking addiction. That is now recognised to be largely due to the pharmacological effects of nicotine within the central nervous system. The idea of restricting such research has been forcibly contested because, it is claimed, it is so important for the help that it can give to smokers in giving up. The pharmacology of nicotine has become an "interesting" study in its own right. Funded largely by the Medical Research Council, workers are studying receptors in the rat brain: how they interact with nicotine, the effect this has on behaviour, and how in turn other drugs affect the interactions.

Nowhere is there an explanation of how elucidation of these central mechanisms is likely to help smokers to combat the habit. In experimental rats, the procedures include the implantation of brain electrodes, maze running, food deprivation—so that they will press a lever to get a food reward—the induction of stress, conditioned taste aversion, or learning to dislike a taste through associating it with feeling ill or nauseous, direct injections of nicotine into the brain and, of course, multiple injections of other drugs at various sites to see how this affects their response to nicotine.

While the tobacco industry spends £100 million a year on promotion, and while health education and anti-smoking clinics have inadequate funding, one is not impressed by the essential or directly helpful nature of experimental work in rats.

The regulatory framework proposed is a tighter system of control involving project licensing and personal licensing of competence with the approval of the Home Secretary. That dual system of licensing is welcome provided that, first, the research is in the public interest and, secondly, that there is no alternative method and the Home Secretary's staff is adequate.

When he replies will my hon. Friend say whether the present team of 15 inspectors can supervise experiments with 3·5 million animals? I ask him to increase the establishment to a realistic level in the light of the Bill. That should be in respect of the animals and their source. There is public anxiety about the disappearance of unwarranted or stolen pets to be used as laboratory animals. Inspectors will have to be fully assured that all laboratories use animals that have come from sources defined in the Bill.

The inspectorate's work will be made that much easier if licences are granted only if the applicant is adequately qualified and has a demonstrable skill in the techniques he or she wishes to carry out. That point was dealt with adequately by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes). The training schemes which are at present voluntary are missing from the Bill. With no official incentive, companies and universities will not train their staff. Will my hon. Friend the Minister commit the Government to establishing new training schemes?

That will be all the more necessary as the powers and duties of the persons named as being responsible for the daily care and well-being of the animals are unclear. Such a person in authority must be available at all times. That element is missing from the Bill.

I give a cautious welcome to this reform of the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876. It is very much a curate's egg. It is an effective attempt to meet the scientific and technological advances of the 110 years since that Act. The Bill may not go as far as many hon. Members wish and I hope that it will be extended in Committee.

12.47 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary most warmly on his great skill and success in steering the Bill so far. I wish him all success in steering it onto the statute book. I am a strong advocate of medical research and an officer of the all-party group on the chemical industry, and I strongly support the Bill.

We can all take pride in the Government's record. Every year since they came to office in 1979 the number of animal experiments has fallen. I hope that my hon. Friend will take my interventions and my comments as constructive. I thoroughly welcome the Bill.

In balancing the needs of man and the welfare of animals we should bear in mind the fact that 10 per cent. of farm animals die in the first month of their life. It has been said that 250,000 children's lives have been saved in the past 50 years through drug research related to animal experiments.

Mr. Corbyn: The hon. Gentleman has just made an interesting point about the number of lives saved through animal research. Will he tell the House how that information has been drawn together and what proof there is to support it?

Mr. Thurnham: The information was on a video that I watched this morning in which Sir Douglas Black was commenting. The video is entitled "What About People" and is produced by the Research Defence Society. I will supply the hon. Gentleman with the video if he wants any further information. I refer him to Sir Douglas Black's comments which I do not wish to dispute.

I wish to make some points about the Draize, cosmetic and LD50 tests. The number of Draize tests has fallen to 7,800. That is a substantial reduction and shows the extent to which the test can be reduced. I should like to thank my hon. Friend for his letter of September last year in which he said:

> "We would very much like to see the ending of the Draize eye test as soon as possible"

and that he had ordered a survey of all such tests performed here. He wrote again in December about cosmetics tests and the LD50 test. He said that there had been a "dramatic reduction" of cosmetics tests from 30,500 in 1979 to 17,500 in 1984. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) and my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Norris) should note that cosmetics include all substances applied to the skin. If they want to continue research on medicines but not on cosmetics, they should remember that the skin is the largest organ of the body. They would therefore seem to advocate research in regard to all but the largest organ.

As for LD50, my hon. Friend the Minister said:

"You may be assured that we will continue to monitor these tests closely".

Why do we have no numbers? I am worried that we are unable to establish the number of LD50 tests. The advisory committee report of 1979 said that 41 per cent. of acute toxicity tests were LD50 tests and that that was only an approximate figure and subject to a substantial margin of error. Is my hon. Friend able to give any idea of the number of LD50 tests being carried out? I estimate that they exceed 100,000 a year. Far fewer cosmetic and Draize tests are conducted.

National statistics for toxicity tests show that they are increasing as a proportion. Acute toxicity tests represented 9·9 per cent. of all tests in 1978, whereas they represent 11·3 per cent. in 1984. In view of what has been said about the reduced need for the LD50 test, how much reliance can we put on my hon. Friend's assurance that the matter would be "closely monitored" when we do not have any numbers and when such a large area of testing is involved?

Emotions do not seem to be running as high now as they did in 1907 when the "Brown Dog" statue was erected in Battersea Park. I am interested in those parts of the Bill which relate to embryos and foetuses. We have had a great deal of controversy relating to human embryos, and I know that the Bill provides protection for the developing embryo or foetus only after half of the gestation period, unless the Secretary of State decides otherwise. Medical scientists want to carry out embryo research to minimise the number of children born with severe congenital handicap. Some such research can be carried out only by using human embryos, but other research can use other animals such as mice. Unfortunately, the male mouse's semen can be obtained only by killing it. Fortunately, no such restrictions apply to human beings. I wonder how my hon. Friend the Minister would balance the value of a mouse's life against a pre-fourteen day human embryo.

Perhaps that is an example of the value of the Bill, in which so much is rightly left to the discretion of future Home Secretaries. That is a feature of the Bill which I hope is not lost. I congratulate my hon. Friend on his excellent work presenting the Bill and commend it fully to the House.

12.53 am

Mr. Mark Hughes (City of Durham): I start with something approaching a declaration of interest. As many hon. Members will know, I am a Privy Council appointed member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. In that capacity, I have a non-pecuniary interest in the subject of the Bill.

There is an absolute stance. It is that, as a Labour friend of aphids, or whatever, one must not destroy life. We must try by all means preserve life. It is interesting that not one right hon. or hon. Member has adopted an absolutist position.

In his very interesting speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr, Cohen) said that at that point one does not damage life. I do not accept the point at which my hon. Friend says that one should not carry out experiments, but I fully appreciate that, in his terms, he holds a proper and correct view of life when he draws that line. Although, therefore, we may disagree, there will be no hassle between us. I have a brother who is dying of cancer, so I am a little reluctant to reduce the opportunities for medical research. If it means that the odd rat, cat or dog gets mischief done to it, so be it. But that is a highly subjective, temporary and personal position. I trust that my hon. Friend will not find it difficult to understand why I cannot follow him all the way.

The Bill would transfer control over experimentation to a Home Office inspectorate. That is the first difficulty. The number of qualified vets and medical practitioners who man the inspectorate and who can be inspected by it amount to fewer than 200. We run the risk of creating a highly incestuous group. Those who grant the licences know and are friendly with those to whom the licences are granted. This causes me to hesitate—I put it no higher than that—because it means that the policeman is part of the poacher gang.

I give notice to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department that that point will be examined very carefully in Committee. We shall try to ensure that an effective, arm's length relationship is established between the licensing authority — the inspectorate — and the licensees. Many of my hon. Friends and I are not satisfied that that relationship is adequately dealt with in the Bill. A group of 15 or 20 inspectors are well known to all the major laboratories and universities. They are wholly honourable men, but they will issue the licences and also supervise both the project licences and the personal licences. That will not secure the public interest. More than that is required. We shall seek in Committee to find a more certain method of enabling the public interest to be secured, particularly over project licensing. We must be assured that projects in which animals will be subjected to severe, less severe or moderate procedures are not in the hands of cosy, in-house relationships. It must be subject to external vetting—I am sorry, that is a terrible pun. It must be under the control of a body that is not in-house. What worries me about laboratory animal veterinary work is that it is in-house with a small number of vets and medical people. I give notice to the Under-Secretary that when we get to Committee we shall look at that.

I see no reason, in terms of the protection of animals, why Crown immunity should remain in the Bill. If experiments are taking place at Porton down or at any other Ministry of Defence establishment, and if procedures are required at pathological laboratories under the control and within the premises of the Home Office rather than local government, I see no reason why animals subjected to laboratory experiments in those establishments should not have the same licensing procedure for their welfare. A rat owned by the Ministry of Defence should not be subjected to more heinous treatment than one in a university or a chemical laboratory. In committee I and my colleagues will seek major modifications to the Bill in that area. I see no case for Crown immunity on animal welfare. The inspectors are already covered by the Official Secrets Act and there is therefore no difficulty on that score.

I and my hon. Friends on the Committee will need a great deal of persuading that Crown immunity should not be waived for the welfare of laboratory animals. If we do nasty things for chemical warfare purposes, at least let the rats or the chimpanzees or whatever be decently treated. I may not like what we are doing, but I want to make sure the animals are properly looked after.

I must now say why I will not go along with the opposition expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton. The notes of guidance and other things we can do in Committee will provide 98 per cent. of what my hon.

[Mr. Mark Hughes]

Friend seeks in the reasoned amendment that he has placed before the House. I advise my hon. Friend that I will not vote for that reasoned amendment if it is called. There is a perfectly honourable difference of opinion between us.

That is not the case in my relationship with the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock). In all my 15 years in the House, I have never read a piece of more egregious crap than his amendment. If the House passed that, it should be ashamed of itself.

1.5 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): As someone said, follow that!

After 110 years, the House deserved today's debate, and the introduction of new legislation to control scientific work on animals is a momentous event. I feel a particular pride and pleasure in commending the Bill to the House, for three reasons.

First, in common with many other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate, I have for many years—certainly since before I took up my present responsibilities—taken an active interest in the protection and welfare of animals. Secondly, as the Home Office Minister responsible for the subject over the past three years, I have made this project one of my principal tasks. Thirdly, I know how much hard work has gone into getting the right balance in the Bill. I believe that it is a good Bill and that its structure and framework will serve us well and help animals for many years to come.

It is not surprising that opinions on the details have differed, and I look forward to the Committee stage and the opportunity to come to grips with those matters, but it is significant that there has been a large measure of agreement on both sides of the House about the importance of the topic and the need to make progress.

I am particularly glad to have this opportunity, as one of the first debates in which I participated in the House was the discussion on the attempt by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) to change the law on animal experiments, which failed, but put down a marker which a number of hon. Members have pursued over the years. I remember that when the then Minister of State, Home Office, now my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, replied to the debate, I urged him to get on with it, little thinking that I was shaking my fist at fate and that I would be the one who would have to get on with it.

We have seen some useful advances in animal welfare over the past three years, including the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes), strongly backed by the Government, to ban the sale of pets in open street markets, the Bill to make it easier to prosecute those involved in the disgusting sport of badger baiting, and the grant for research into alternatives which the Government made to FRAME. We are the first Government ever to make such a grant. The hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) thought that our grant was stingy, but he was obviously brought up in the Ken Livingstone school of grant giving, and we can never hope to match that. The sum is certainly less than Ken Livingstone has given to some less notable causes.

I note what my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Gregory) said about the grant, but I urge on him the need not merely to think of a figure that sounds rather grand and to say, "£1 million is the right figure." We gave FRAME £150,000 because that is what it asked for to do the work that needed to be done. I am sure that that is the right basis on which to fund research.

I particularly thank the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) for a distinguished contribution, making a number of significant points. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman, because I know that before he took on Front-Bench responsibilities, and during his first period in the House, no one fought harder to make advances in animal welfare. It is a subject about which he is concerned, and he strove with great success to strike a balance.

Because the hon. Gentleman is advised by many of the people who have advised me, he knows how much work has gone into the Bill and how many people, such as Clive Hollands and others, have done so much to advance the cause of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Erdington also made it clear that there were a number of points to be examined in Committee. I agree with him on several of those points, particularly about the animal procedures committee. I stress that I see this as a different organisation from the Secretary of State's advisory committee, which was an in-house committee which did valuable work. We are giving the animal procedures committee a separate statutory existence, with the aim that it should be an independent body, with distinguished members drawn from the scientific, medical, and animal welfare sectors.

I am delighted at the increase in the number of distinguished animal welfare campaigners who have gone on to the committee in my time in the Home Office. They will become members of the animal procedures committee. I hope that that committee, under an independent chairman, will take an independent stand and look into matters into which it wants to look, and not just into matters that are referred to it by the Home Secretary. I hope, too, that it will fulfil the watchdog role, but as a watchdog that knows from experience what this sophisticated arrangement is about. I look forward to responding positively on a whole range of issues in Committee, as we have got into the habit of doing.

I commend what the hon. Gentleman said, because I know the pressures which he and the hon. Member for Durham (Mr. Hughes) come under from those who are opposed to all animal experiments, and in particular what he said about the conquest of disease.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): The hon. Gentleman should recognise that there is a position between the Government's and that of those who say that there should be no animal experiments. Many of us think that some animal experiments are necessary to try to cure otherwise incurable human diseases, but also that we could move faster forward than the Government are proposing. I hope that the Minister will withdraw the comment that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) is under pressure from a lobby that is opposed to all animal experimentation.

Mr. Mellor: I realise that the hon. Lady accepts the need for some animal experiments but not for others. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) made it clear that some people are opposed to all animal experiments and have campaigned on that basis.

The hon. Member for Erdington made clear the significance of the conquest of disease, and we should not

get complacent about that. Many of us can recall from family experience, as a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have done, the way in which lives were cut off in their prime through diseases which today can be vanquished. My mother had two siblings who died in infancy of diphtheria, which years ago used to kill eight children in 1,000, but now does not kill any.

We know the progress that has been made in the procedures that can be carried on in operating theatres, and in the provision of modern antibiotics, which are all effective because of the careful testing that has gone on in advance. None of us take for granted such medical advances when so much remains to be done. The hon. Member made a distinguished speech, and I look forward to taking these matters further with him in Committee.

I wish that I could say the same—because this is not a partisan matter—about the speech of the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock). If ever a speech fell below the level of expectation, the one to which he treated us did so comprehensively. However, it was rather better than it was trailed, because I was told by a distinguished veterinarian, who has been working on the Bill for three years, that the hon. Member said that the Bill was a whitewash. He is quoted in *Veterinary Record* as saying, with the moderation that we have come to expect from the alliance:

"I will be going hell for leather to expose the Bill for what it is and to destroy it."

The hon. Gentleman's speech tonight was slightly more measured, but it was not much better.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman's speech will be read by the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), who is a medical practitioner, and that the right hon. Gentleman will think that it was unwise of him to be wherever he is and leave the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South to put the alliance case. If ever there was the fudge and mudge that the right hon. Member so condemns in the House, I suspect that it was in the hon. Gentleman's speech, particularly with the empty rhetorical tub-thumping that had no substance by way of a viable alternative as to where, in a sophisticated society, we strike the balance between what needs to be done and what does not.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) had a more stylish approach to the same issue and managed to steer round the more obvious pitfalls into which his less experienced hon. Friend fell. But neither of them suggested anything of which any responsible political party could feel remotely proud. If they do not think that the Bill is right, they should be capable of more than the third-rate sniping which alienated hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber tonight.

Mr. Meadowcroft: One can always tell when Ministers are hiding behind a poll, because they make this kind of attack. In the other place, 18 alliance Members took part in the debate and we should not have to spell out tonight the alternatives suggested.

Mr. Mellor: The noble Lord who spoke for the alliance in the other place recognised the worth of the amendments by not pressing any to a Division because he knew that if he did he would be alone in the Lobby. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that a cheap jibe about the polls is the answer, many in different or no political parties who have worked in harmony to produce the Bill will disagree, because he shows again that the alliance simply sees such issues as an opportunity to exploit them to the lowest common denominator of popularism. That does not go down well. The more serious contributions are worthy of more time.

I agree with the hon. Member for Erdington about the figures in the moderate animal welfare movement. I think in particular of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Association—John Seamer and David Morton—and FRAME, whose help has been invaluable, whose parliamentary group has been a constant source of pressure for change and whose chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North made an excellent speech containing some necessary detailed points. I also think of the campaign for the Reform of Animal Experiments and of Clive Hollands, for whom I have a great admiration, who has been brave in recognising that the best should never be the enemy of the good, and who, as a committed anti-vivisectionist, has striven to make the Bill achieve the consensus that it has achieved.

I also think of Lord Houghton, without whom the Bill would not have been possible. At 86 years of age, he has a remarkably agile mind and a remarkable commitment. In some darker moments when I have had to endure flack about the issue I have drawn comfort from his steadfastness. When he said at the launch of the White Paper that this was the best thing for 30 years, all those associated with the Bill took heart because we knew that he had a genuine commitment.

I should also like to mention the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry, the Chemical Industries Association and the Research Defence Society, which have given generously of their time and effort to try to strike a balance. It is in no one's interest that doctors should be impeded. It is in no one's interest that the British pharmaceutical industry—one of our successes—should be damaged in its efforts to provide the products which we and the rest of the world need. It is in no one's interest that the chemical industry's chances should be made any more difficult or that we should drive more jobs out of Britain. However, all involved recognise that they should be subject to a rigorous legal framework. That is what we have today and what we shall certainly have tomorrow under the Bill.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Drake for what she said when she set out the major steps forward in the Bill. I can deal with them only in shorthand, because of the time. The project licence for the first time gives us the opportunity to examine each project and to ask whether it is necessary, to strike a balance between a project's aim and the means by which it is to be achieved, to look at the categories of discomfort and pain inflicted on animals, and to draw down the standard so that project licences contain a more restrictive condition than is possible today.

The Bill will bring breeding establishments under control, so that at last we can nail the fear of so many people that their pets are being used in vivisection. Every normal domestic animal that is used will have to have a pedigree and its origin will be established. The breeding establishments will be properly examined.

Finally, there is a provision for constant veterinary supervision by the presence in a laboratory of a named person on whom all legal responsibility rests. An important precedent for that was created in the safety at work legislation.

[Mr. Mellor]

The inspectorate totals 15, all of them either doctors or vets. We intend to increase the numbers, and to that end we have placed advertisements in the relevant newspapers this very week for three further inspectors. Others will need to be recruited.

I appreciate the sincerity of my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) on this and other moral issues. However, he should not underestimate the need for product safety in our society. We take it for granted that the products that we use in our homes and at work are safe. I say to Opposition Members who are dubious about the Bill that they should not throw away all the health and safety at work arrangements that have been achieved. Any number of people are subjected, day in day out, to constant exposure to chemicals during the manufacture of a wide range of products. If we cannot be aware of the toxicity of those products, it will be a retrograde step: we will be playing with the health and livelihoods of many working people, which would not be right.

I commend the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North on the vexed question of the tests which Mobilisation and its supporters in the House think should be banned overnight. Because of the time, I shall not go through all the details. I wish to make one point about the Draize and LD50 tests. It is too easy, for what must be a sophisticated measure, to say that we intend to ban those procedures. We are doing something far more radical than that. We are not saying that we will ban 2 per cent. or 3 per cent. of animal experiments, and the remainder are all right. We are saying that every animal experiment must be justified. That is a way of increasing the pressure that we have already applied, and which has led to a fall in the number of tests over a decade — 5·6 million to 3·5 million last year, with a fall of 750,000 achieved during the last two years alone.

The Draize test will not be necessary for very much longer. We intend to use the project licence to ensure that it is carried out only where it has to be carried out, with all the pre-screening which will avoid the excesses which are sometimes mentioned erroneously in the Mobilisation literature. There will come a time, and it is not far removed, when full alternatives will be possible for the Draize test. However, it would be irresponsible to say that the point has been reached where there is not any case for testing any substance on the eyes. I cannot wait for the time when that test will be unnecessary.

The same is true of LD50. There are only a limited number of cases where the so-called classic LD50—if we can so dignify it — is required. We will use the project licensing system to restrict those occasions ever more tightly. The limit test and other tests pioneered by our advisory committee will have the effect of improving the standards of our testing. However, let none of us be under any illusions—toxicity testing is needed for the basic protection of men, women and children in a wide range of activities at work and in the home. Already, through FRAME and the other groups, tests are being carried out on non-animal alternatives. I hope and pray that those will be successful, but until they are no responsible Government could throw over this protection.

I shall conclude by recalling the insistent advice of Lord Houghton, that to win better protection for animals they must be put into politics, and that in politics all roads lead to Westminster. Laboratory animals are now at Westminster for the first time in 110 years. We have an opportunity today to provide a lasting service to the cause of animal welfare and humane research, and it is on that basis that I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 125, Noes 28.

Division No. 78] **[1.25 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fookes, Miss Janet
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hind, Kenneth
Holt, Richard
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jackson, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Maclean, David John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

NOES

Alton, David	Lamond, James
Ashdown, Paddy	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Loyden, Edward
Beith, A. J.	Madden, Max
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Maynard, Miss Joan
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Meadowcroft, Michael
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*	Nellist, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	Penhaligon, David
Cohen, Harry	Sedgemore, Brian
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*	Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*	Skinner, Dennis
Flannery, Martin	Wallace, James
Hancock, Michael	
Hardy, Peter	Tellers for the Noes:
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*	Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Kirkwood, Archy	Mr. Bob Clay.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

ANIMALS (SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES) BILL *[Lords]* [MONEY]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

ANIMALS (SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES) BILL *[Lords]* [WAYS AND MEANS]

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the charging of fees payable into the Consolidated Fund.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments &c.)

AGRICULTURE

That the Agriculture and Horticulture Grant (Variation) Scheme 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 57), dated 15th January 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 24th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Question agreed to.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Standing Order of 16th December 1983 relating to the nomination of the Select Committee on Members' Interests be amended, by leaving out Mr. Paddy Ashdown and inserting Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.—*[Mr. Cope.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Acklington and Castington Prisons

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

1.35 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The Minister has had a long evening. He has had a six-hour debate on animals to reply to, but I feel that it is necessary to detain him for half an hour on the subject of prisons and those who work in them. When the former Royal Air Force airfield at Acklington was taken over by the Home Office about 15 years ago to become a prison, the change was not universally welcomed in the surrounding area. At times, in the short history of the prison, there has been quite a lot of local concern either about escapes or the decision to introduce life prisoners into a category C prison which was at variance with the plans originally discussed with the local community.

Despite the inevitable anxieties, the prison has undoubtedly won acceptance from the vast majority of people in the area. It provides jobs in an area of very high unemployment and prison officers and civilian employees are now a large and valued part of the community. Many prison officers are now buying their own houses and they can be found in many of the towns and villages in my constituency. Many local people are involved in part-time or voluntary activity at the prison, and prisoners have contributed to local life by making toys and equipment for children, cooking meals for pensioners and through sporting fixtures. The feasibility of putting selected life sentence prisoners into a category C prison after they have served the majority of their sentence and been assessed as suitable has been proved. I supported that decision when it was made, and I believe that it has worked satisfactorily. There are inevitably some problems and tonight's debate gives me an opportunity to raise them.

I wish to set them in the context of institutions which have an established place in the local scene and do a difficult job with the respect and understanding of the community. Out of Acklington grew Castington, a young offenders' institution which started as a wing of the adult prison but which is now a fully separate institution with its own perimeter security, its own governor and plans to extend to nearly twice its present numbers. Young offenders institutions do not at present have a security classification like that of adult prisons. That is a cause of concern to the Prison Officers' Association, but it is clear that it requires and has, a higher level of security than Acklington.

Castington's inmates are long-term prisoners. To be sentenced to a substantial term of imprisonment at 17 or 18 is the consequence of a very serious offence or offences. Castington now faces the same issue that confronted Acklington. The Home Office wants to introduce life prisoners. In Castington's case, these cannot be prisoners reaching the end of their sentences, for they will serve out the later years of their sentences in adult prisons, some of them, ironically, more secure than Castington. At present, Castington is not equipped to cope with such a change in its role and one of my objects is to seek the Minister's assurance that no such change will take place until the security and staffing is fully adequate to the needs which would be created. There are lessons to be learned from the experiences of last summer at Castington when there were serious disturbances. Those events,

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

which included a roof top protest, placed considerable demands on prison officers, many of whom acted with notable courage and skill to bring the problems under control.

It was also demonstrated that it was possible for an inmate to barricade his cell door and break through the cell walls before officers could get into the cell to stop him. The cells were simply not strong enough for some of the prisoners they were accommodating, let alone for some of the lifers who might be placed in them later.

It is clearly the objective of the governor and staff at Castington so to organise the regime that such disturbances are extremely unlikely to occur, and there are good signs that they are succeeding. *The Journal* in Newcastle has carried encouraging reports not only of the progress made but of pioneering work in which football hooligans helped to explore the causes of football violence.

However, the possibility of disruption cannot be ruled out, and precautions must be taken. Perimeter security has already been improved and steps are now being taken to prevent cells from being barricaded. A few cells have been strengthened. Much further work is necessary before the Home Office can be satisfied that the institution's admission policy can be changed, and I hope that the Minister will be clear on that point tonight.

There is anxiety that other pressures on the Department's budget such as the conversion of RAF Lindholme to prison use are pre-empting the necessary resources, but walls do not a prison make, and it is on the regime and the staff that the effectiveness of the institution depends. Until relatively recently, the running of prisons throughout the country was largely dependent on large amounts of overtime working. Both the administration of prisons and the prison officers' standard of living became dependent on overtime. The introduction of a system of overtime budgets is intended to change that pattern, but there is anxiety at both Acklington and Castington that it may lead to a restricted regime in future. The fear is greatest at Castington because the disturbances last summer gave rise to large amounts of overtime. If that overtime is counted against this year's budget, it will have a direct and drastic effect on the availability of staff to do constructive work with those in their custody. I hope that the Minister can ensure that that does not happen.

In the light of the disturbances, there is also an anxiety among Castington staff that control and restraint training should be taken by all officers, and appropriate "refresher" training at regular intervals.

Another security anxiety arises from the proposal that, as part of the policy of "civilianising" officers mess staff, there should no longer be a prison officer in charge of the shared mess which serves both Acklington and Castington. The local situation would make such a change very unwise. The mess is isolated and at a distance from both prisons: it would not be adequate for a civilian employee to have charge of the prisoners who work in the mess, particularly between mealtimes when no prison officer may be in the building. I plead with the Minister to make certain that "civilianisation" is not rigidly applied in a situation where it could pose a threat to security. There is a further anxiety about the intention of the prison Department to dispense with day duty yard patrols. Castington and Acklington cover a wide area, and there is a strong case for the added security provided by those patrols.

Adult prisoners and young trainees need to be occupied as constructively as possible: that is the best way of promoting self-discipline both inside the prison and when a prisoner is discharged. It is, therefore, a matter for concern that there is such a large amount of unused or underused workshop accommodation at both Acklington and Castington. Only a fraction of the available workshop space is serving the purpose for which it was intended. There has been a serious decline in prison industries throughout the country: Acklington and Castington, unlike the dispersal prisons, are designed to have a much larger work and training component, and I hope that the Minister can tell us how it will be increased in future. Workshop facilities that cost millions of pounds should not be standing empty.

Another wasted facility is the purpose-built hospital at Acklington, which is still not in use. The Department has not yet succeeded in recruiting a full-time medical officer for the two prisons, and has not staffed the hospital. That means that prisoners must be taken away to Ashington hospital, and officers have to be deployed to accompany them. It is questionable whether the hospital should have been put into Acklington at all. On security grounds, there would have been a much better case for putting it within the Castington perimeter. But how long is it to remain in its present unused state?

Both institutions have excellent education facilities, which provide very good opportunities for those motivated to use them. It is sometimes suggested, however, that there needs to be more of a drive to bring basic literacy and numeracy to those who are less well motivated but whose criminality may owe something to their inability to cope with the basic requirements of modern society.

Physical education and sport are a very important part of the programme of both institutions and are especially valuable as an outlet for the energies of the young inmates as Castington. The sports facilities are envied by some of the local rural communities, which do not enjoy the extensive sports ad leisure centres so common in urban areas. I welcome the way in which disabled members of the local community have been given the opportunity to use prison sports facilities, and I hope that such ideas will be developed. I recognise that, because of the value of physical education as part of the regime, it will be a good thing if Castington could be given the chance to develop the additional hard and grass sports area for which it has suitable land within its perimeter.

There are still a large number of unoccupied houses adjoining the perimeter of the two prisons—a subject of many parliamentary questions from me in earlier years. I understand that many of the remaining properties will be cleared to make way for future development at Castington. I should welcome some clarification on the point, since keeping homes empty is undesirable and represents a further potential security problem.

It is sometimes suggested in the local community that when escapes occur, as they have in the past at Acklington, there should be a local alert, perhaps by a siren, so that suspicious persons seen in the locality can be reported. I share the view that a general alarm would be undesirable, because it would give the impression of danger when the individual who has escaped may pose no danger to the local community. However, there are ways

of alerting those whose property might be used as cover, and I hope that that sort of thing will be done. Local radio has proved helpful in that respect, spreading the information that a prisoner has escaped without giving a general sense of alarm when there may be no good reason to do so.

Recent years have seen major and unsettling changes in the prison service. The prison population nationally has continued to increase alarmingly, while the Home Office has sought with increasing difficulty to contain the prison service budget. The violence which has brought people into prison, many of them very young, must be contained inside the prison and makes the prison officer's job difficult and sometimes dangerous. Prison officers have had to take the consequences of political decisions. Many of them will not easily forget the effect of the previous Home Secretary's arbitrary decision on life sentences on lifers, who suddenly discovered that their release dates had been put back indefinitely.

The prison service has come through a period of doubt and questioning — started by the psychiatrists and criminologists — about whether there is any scope for what used to be called "reforming" the prisoners, or whether staff were simply to be engaged in containment. There is now a rather more realistic, but nevertheless positive climate in the prison service, but it has come at a time of increased budgetary restraint. There is clearly a need for greater flexibility in the ability of the local prison governor to manage the resources for which he is responsible, but officers are understandably worried that changes in established staffing practices will be used by the Home Office as an excuse for cutting resources, reducing security and locking prisoners in their cells for long periods.

I hope that by his reply tonight the Minister can demonstrate that this will not be so and that the Home Office has a firm commitment to maintaining and increasing the effectiveness of institutions which house long-term prisoners such as Acklington and Castington.

1.47 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I welcome the interest which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has consistently shown in these two establishments and his acknowledgement tonight of their constructive relationship with the local community, which I also welcome. I am glad to have this opportunity to respond to the matters which he raised, and I shall try to deal with as many of them as I can in the time available. In the event that I fail to deal with all of them, I shall write to the hon. Gentleman about any outstanding matters.

May I begin with Castington youth custody centre. Castington's security and control record is good. There has not been an escape from the youth custody centre since April 1983. That occasion, when three inmates escaped and were recaptured, has been the only escape since it was opened in January 1983. However, there have been several incidents. Last year, there were two short lived and passive demonstrations. In the first, 37 trainees refused to leave the association area at lock-up and remained there for about an hour. On the second occasion, 18 trainees made a similar gesture, although that one lasted for only a few minutes.

In addition, during 1985, there were 20 incidents involving 45 inmates in which cells were barricaded or damaged. A further relatively minor case occurred on Friday. Most of them were confined to barricading the doors and damaging cell equipment, but on the night of 28 June 1985, three trainees broke through the walls of their cells and climbed on to the roof of their wing.

During 1985 there were three further occasions when inmates broke through the walls of their cells in that way. I am glad to say that there have been no more since the new year. I join the hon. Gentleman in paying tribute to the courage and professionalism shown by staff in dealing with those incidents.

The strengthening of cells would seem to be called for in the light of what has happened. As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the national chairman of the Prison Officers Association wrote to the Department in October, expressing his members' anxiety about the position. The Department's reply last month explained that the cell walls had been constructed of low density concrete blocks which were of the usual current standard for youth custody centres such as Castington. There have not been comparable problems on the same scale at other centres, and I do not believe that we would be justified in applying a general increase in standards because of problems at Castington. Moreover, because of the population pressures generally within the prison system we cannot contemplate the wholesale temporary removal of prisoners at Castington to carry out regrading work to the cells.

We are, and would have to be on the facts, worried about the position at Castington. We have strengthened the walls of eight cells by the application of robust steel mesh covered with concrete. We are considering the possibility of similarly upgrading a few additional cells in each wing to provide the governor with a flexible amount of accommodation in which to put troublesome trainees. I hope that that is a step in the right direction.

We are also about to embark on a programme of welding together the constituent parts of the beds in each cell and anchoring them to the floor.

In the two wings to be opened later this year, cells have been provided with doors that can open outwards to prevent barricading. That will deny inmates the time in which to cause serious damage, let alone penetrate the cell wall. I hope that the work will go a long way towards eliminating the problems that the governor and his staff have experienced.

The current control position is that, following each incident, the appropriate disciplinary action was taken. The position is being monitored by the regional director. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the governor and the staff have devoted considerable effort to the creation of a positive relationship with the inmates. Recent months have seen reductions in offences against discipline and a more relaxed atmosphere.

Castington already keeps all its inmates fully and constructively occupied. It is in the final stages of a redevelopment scheme which, as well as increasing its population from 180 to 300, will further expand the facilities and enable additional playing fields, as well as a planned hard surface area, to be brought into use. It is expected that some of those facilities will be brought into use by the end of the year.

I shall say a brief word about the national staffing scene in reponse to what the hon. Gentleman said about it. He expressed anxiety about the effect on the establishment of the limited funds available for prison officer overtime. To put that in context, prison officer numbers, nationally, are

[Mr. David Mellor]

higher than they have ever been. They stood at 18,600 on 1 January this year. That represents and increase of about 18 per cent. since 1979. Over the same period the inmate population increased by about 12 per cent.

During the next three years—from April this year to March 1989—we plan to recruit a further 3,500 staff. Although most of those will be required to man new accommodation, some are intended to relieve pressure at existing establishments where that is justified. Despite that injection of staff, however, there remains a difference between the number of staff employed and the authorised staffing levels.

In the northern region, the shortfall between staff in post and authorised staffing levels is currently running at about 17·5 per cent. Acklington reflects that regional average. Castington, however, is staffed to within 9 per cent. of its authorised level. That favourable treatment of Castington reflects its proposed role in the handling and containment of a long-term and life sentence population.

The nationally high level of overtime working in the prison service—on average about 16 hours a week—must be seen as a major problem. We have set a cash limit on the overtime budget this year, but I must emphasise that we have not cut expenditure in cash terms. The budget, at £81·6 million, is some £5 million more than last year's spend, and a further cash increase is proposed for next year's budget.

The overtime budget has not significantly affected the regime at either Acklington or Castington. There has been somewhat less scope for local staff training than one might have wished, but nearly half of Castington's discipline staff and three quarters of those at Acklington have so far undergone the four-day course in control and restraint training.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the introduction of lifers, which is of special interest to me as I carry responsibility in the Home Office for case work on life sentence prisoners, and he expressed anxiety about their introduction at Castington. There are three main centres for young offenders who are serving sentences of custody for life, detention during Her Majesty's pleasure and detention for life. They are located at the youth custody centres at Aylesbury, Exeter and Swinfen hall, near Lichfield. It is recognised that there is a need for a young offender lifer centre in the north and we believe that Castington will be the right establishment to take on the role.

I must make it clear, however, that there are, as yet, no firm plans to transfer young offender lifers into Castington. Such a development would be preceded by very careful preparation of staff for work with this special group of young offenders. We shall not proceed until we are satisfied that Castington can properly and safely be asked to assume this function. The hon. Member may take it that we shall keep in touch with him on that so that his representations can be given their proper weight. I appreciate his sensitivity to the concerns of those who work in the prison and of his constituents who live in the surrounding area.

Acklington is a category C establishment, which means that it caters for prisoners who cannot be trusted in wholly open conditions but are not considered to pose a serious danger to the public. The level of security of prisons such as Acklington is commensurate with that judgment. In that context, the prison's security record has been pretty good. In 1983, four prisoners escaped but were recaptured almost immediately. In 1984 there were no escapes from within the prison, although one prisoner absconded from an outside working party. In 1985, five prisoners escaped. Two were recaptured within 48 hours and the others have since been returned to custody.

It has been suggested that some arrangement for alerting the local community of an escape should be instituted. This matter has, of course, been carefully considered by the prison authorities in consultation with the police. The arrangements that are made have to find a balance between the need to alert the public to be on the look out with the need to avoid causing undue anxiety. The view that has been taken is that the local radio station provides the best medium of communication for this purpose. I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's assent to that. If he has any suggestions, we will be happy to consider them.

I can confirm that there are indeed plans to demolish a substantial number of the derelict houses on the perimeter after the failure of attempts to offer them to the local authority. It is sad that that did not work out, but there we are.

The hon. Member mentioned mess staffing. It is true that the prison department has recently proposed that, unless there are very strong reasons to the contrary, officers' messes should be staffed by civilian cooks. This is more economic, but that is not the only reason for making the change. It is in principle inappropriate to use a highly trained prison officer or prison auxiliary on this work. It is, indeed, highly desirable to release such officers for other duties more appropriate to their grade. It is much the same argument as that which has led to the replacement of police officers by ancillary office workers. We are pursuing a consistent policy in the law and order services. Prison officers are badly needed elsewhere. The figures that I gave earlier demonstrate that. We expect to avoid redundancies and are of course prepared to retain prison auxiliaries on mess duties when no other posts can be found for them.

The hon. Gentleman referred to his concern that inmates might in future be employed in the mess under the supervision of a civilian rather than a prison officer. We shall consider carefully the views of local management and staff on this point, but in general I do not share the Prison Officers Association's concern about this policy. Any inmates working in the mess will have been specially selected for that purpose. Civilians supervise inmates in messes and elsewhere at other establishments without difficulty. I stress that no decision has yet been taken about Acklington.

Mr. Beith: I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will take careful note of what I said about the physical location of the mess and about civilians being unaided for considerable periods of time while they are supervising inmates.

Mr. Mellor: I took that point on board. That is why I stressed that no decision has yet been taken. The hon. Gentleman's point will certainly be looked at. We have a great interest in ensuring that everything goes smoothly at this establishment, that staff are not placed in jeopardy and that offenders do not abscond and make a nuisance of

themselves in the neighbourhood. We are anxious to build on the already good relationship in the neighbourhood of Acklington.

The hon. Gentleman referred to education and reported that there is concern about the balance of the education programme. I am satisfied that the programme strikes a reasonable balance between the needs of those inmates who are capable of more advanced studies and those whose educational requirements are more basic. Literacy and remedial classes are available to prisoners who are prepared to make use of them. I know that the education officer at the prison attaches great importance to identifying and encouraging such prisoners. A number of inmates are attending classes of this kind, but we cannot and would not wish to make attendance at classes by adults compulsory. The range of the educational programmes at both Acklington and Castington, and the quality of their library services, are among the best features of the two establishments.

Mr. Beith *indicated assent.*

Mr. Mellor: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's assent. He also referred to the employment of prisoners. The current employment plan is to provide some 173 industrial workplaces at Acklington: 100 in the tailoring workshop, up to 60 for an engineering or woodwork industry and 13 in the laundry. The present position is that the laundry is fully manned. Some 45 inmates are employed in the tailoring workshop and the aim is to employ the full complement of 100 inmates as soon as the current programme of recruitment workshop preparation has been completed. Prison service industries and farms are currently carrying out an investment appraisal of the engineering and woodwork industry being considered for Acklington. The outcome is likely to be known shortly. I shall let the hon. Gentleman know about that as soon as we have the details.

I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the current lack of employment opportunities at Acklington. It is also the case that the Gaydon hangar is not yet fully in use, but the hon. Gentleman may be assured that the prison department is doing what it can to speed up the process of employing inmates and making the best use of the hangar. But it is quite clearly prudent to ensure that the investment of public money in prison industries at Acklington is soundly based. The investment appraisal is designed to ensure that this objective is met.

As for medical facilities, perhaps I should explain that the purpose built hospital at Acklington was designed to serve, and does serve, the populations of the two establishments, which together now hold over 600 inmates. The medical and hospital staff also serve both establishments. I share the hon. Gentleman's disappointment that it has not yet been possible to bring the in-patient facility into use. Initially there were problems with the internal security and control arrangements, and more recently staffing pressures on the discipline side have meant that local management has been unable to make suitable arrangements for a night patrol in the hospital area, which is physically separate from the sleeping accommodation in the main prison. However, I understand and am happy to report that these difficulties have now been resolved. It is hoped to appoint a full-time medical officer to Acklington in the near future and that it will then be possible to set an early date for the opening of the in-patient facility to Acklington inmates, although some upgrading of physical security may be required before its use can be extended to in-patients from Castington.

Finally, it is right that I should place in perspective the matters that the hon. Gentleman has raised. Acklington prison and Castington youth custody centre are both developing, expanding institutions. For their staff these plans afford both the prospect of challenging and worthwhile work and the means and resources with which to carry it out.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 18 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL *(By Order)*

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time upon Thursday 20 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Graduate Enterprise Programme

1. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Paymaster General how many graduates are now being trained on the graduate enterprise programme.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): In 1985-86 graduates are taking part in the programme at Stirling university, St. David's college, Lampeter, the Cranfield institute of technology and the London enterprise agency with the Central Polytechnic of London. There are plans to expand the programme next year, when Durham and Warwick university business schools will join it.

Mr. Thompson: I welcome that and other measures to improve the employment prospects of graduates. May I ask why the numbers are so low? Does my hon. Friend agree that we must encourage further incentives and initiatives from private industry to improve and increase the numbers of talented graduates who have the right attitude and motivation? We must do more, and I hope that we are doing more.

Mr. Trippier: It is important to stress that those are only pilot schemes. They form part of training for enterprise, which is a massive programme, on which we are spending £14·3 million in helping more than 25,000 people. I note the thrust of my hon. Friend's argument. I am anxious to develop and strengthen the programme as quickly as possible.

Special Measures

2. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General if he intends to take any action on the Employment Committee's report on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): We are studying the report very carefully and will give a detailed response to the Committee as soon as is practicable.

Mr. Dixon: Does the Paymaster General accept that the greatest crisis facing this country today is the fact that 4 million men and women are unemployed, of whom 1·6 million have been unemployed for many months? That is a tragedy. Why does the Minister not take note of the constructive suggestions of my hon. Friends, who have spent many hours on the Select Committee?

Mr. Clarke: When the report was produced I welcomed the Select Committee's contribution and agreed with its choice of subject and concentration on age and the long-term unemployed. The Government are already spending more than £2·5 billion on training and employment measures aimed at the same target. I gave a preliminary view on some of the suggestions put forward which did not seem likely to achieve the objectives described.

Mr. Rowe: In his consideration of the report, will my right hon. and learned Friend give careful thought to the possibility of offering some of those people a guarantee of employment? If the political will were there, that could be achieved. It was achieved with the Christmas guarantee for the youth training scheme. Would it not be the most humane and practical way of helping the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: As my hon. Friend says, we have given a guarantee to 16-year-old school leavers. Experiments are taking place to try to give guarantees to the long-term unemployed in Bolton, among other places, within existing schemes. All those measures are worth considering. We cannot give a guarantee of employment to the long-term unemployed until we have worked out schemes to give them work experience, training, or a job. That is why we are rapidly expanding our community programme and other programmes.

Mr. Wainwright: As the Select Committee report directly involved the work of the Manpower Services Commission, will the Paymaster General tell the House about last night's report, according to the papers this morning, that his right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Young, has taken over from the Paymaster General personal responsibility for the direction of the Manpower Services Commission, which means that there will be no one directly answerable for the commission in the House of Commons, which funds the commission?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend, Lord Young, has no more ousted me from responsibility for MSC matters, than I have ousted him from responsibility for industrial relations, inner cities, race relations, and areas in which I play a more prominent role. We have been reduced from five to four Ministers, with the transfer of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) to the Department of Transport, and we have reorganised the distribution of the day-to-day routine work of the Department. Otherwise, we continue to work together.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the success of the Government's policies is evident in the falling numbers of short-term

unemployed? When will he consider that the lessons learnt from the pilot schemes can be used to reduce the increasing numbers of long-term unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: We are trying out pilot schemes in selected cities and concentrating on giving individual attention to the needs of each long-term unemployed person. That is obviously required to bring back into the world of work people who have been away from it for a long time. We are anxiously considering the results in the pilot areas to see what success we are achieving, and we shall certainly build on our achievements as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Leighton: Has the Paymaster General noticed that the meticulously researched and unique report of the Select Committee has received a warm welcome from the quality press, including the editorial in the *Financial Times* on Friday? Has he further noticed the recognition that, if we are serious about tackling unemployment and money is available in the Budget, it is better spent on special employment measures than on tax cuts? When can we expect the White Paper that he has promised in response to the report, and when can we have a proper debate about it?

Mr. Clarke: The Government propose next year to spend £2,670 million on employment and training measures. We are not rejecting the idea of spending money purposefully on ways of assisting the unemployed, particularly the long-term unemployed. We must consider the Select Committee's proposals. Can we provide one-year jobs in the building industry without displacing other workers? Can we find 100,000 new useful jobs in the National Health Service and social services? Is it right to subsidise each long-term unemployed person to the extent set out by the Select Committee, thereby displacing many people from existing jobs? The proposals must be considered anxiously, but we must find remedies that work. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Government will not turn their back on them.

Mr. Hayes: I hear what my right hon. and learned Friend says. When he carefully considers the report, as I am sure he will, will he bear in mind that many Conservative Members are deeply worried that not enough is yet being done to help the long-term unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: We are trying out initiatives, such as job restart courses and job start allowances, in nine selected areas and expanding the community programne as rapidly as possible so that each month a further 10,000 people can be taken on. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall consider every opportunity of giving more assistance to the long-term unemployed. We are arguing, not about the aim, but about the mechanics for achieving it.

Mr. Evans: Does the Paymaster General accept that the programme proposed by the Employment Select Committee, which has a built-in Tory majority, would create 750,000 jobs for the long-term unemployed — people who have been out of work for more than 12 months? Does he acknowledge that until his Government or the next Government adopt such a programme, the long-term unemployed, such as those in St. Helens, will have no chance whatsoever of finding a job?

Mr. Clarke: I do not accept that the Select Committee's proposals would produce 750,000 new jobs. We shall consider the proposals carefully and give a considered, detailed response in the White Paper. Direct measures have played an important part in the Government's policies during the past few years. We have spent far more on and put far more effort into them than our predecessors. We shall continue to consider new and effective methods.

Youth Training Scheme

3. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Paymaster General how many persons are currently on YTS courses in the Billericay constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: At 31 December 1985, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were some 700 young people in training on the youth training scheme in the Basildon local authority district, which contains the constituency of Billericay.

From 1 April 1986 YTS will offer two years of vocational and work-based training for 16-year-old school leavers and one year for 17-year-olds, giving everyone who takes part in it the chance of a vocational qualification recognised by industry. It will be a partnership between Government, industry and trainers and will help to produce the better qualified young work force which industry needs.

Mr. Proctor: Despite the attempt by some Labour politicians to rubbish the youth training scheme, will my hon. Friend confirm that 80 per cent. of youngsters who have completed the course believe that it is worth while?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is correct. More than 80 per cent. of the youngsters who have taken advantage of YTS have been well satisfied with the training that they have received. I am a little confused as to where the Labour party stands on this issue. The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman), in the debate a week last Monday, said that broadly he supported the scheme, but some of his colleagues are content to rubbish it. I often wonder how many youngsters are deterred from going on the YTS because they believe that kind of cant.

Mr. Sheerman: The Minister is well aware that the Opposition support two-year training under the YTS or any other banner. He should not compare Billericay, with its 20 per cent. of young people who do not finish with a job, with the 40 per cent. and over in the northern region with no jobs after YTS. What will he do about the disparities between places such as Billericay and the others which have been doubly hit by the lack of employment opportunity at the end of YTS and the Government's wicked way of closing mode B provision and not replacing it with premium placings?

Mr. Trippier: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks. They were a reaffirmation of what he said in the debate a week last Monday, that, broadly, the Labour party supports the scheme. We regard it as a quality scheme. The House will be interested to hear that 86 per cent. of the places available on the two-year scheme have already been found. The fear that he expressed in the debate a week last Monday seems to be unfounded.

Jobcentres (Registration)

4. **Mr. Watts** asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to introduce a requirement for unemployed persons in areas of low unemployment and severe skill shortage to register at jobcentres.

12. **Mr. Ralph Howell** asked the Paymaster General how many of the unemployed are registered at a jobcentre; and what percentage of the overall total this represents.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): Job seekers whose skills are in short supply are already encouraged to register at jobcentres. We have no plans to reintroduce general compulsory registration. There are some 420,000 people registered at jobcentres. However, records do not distinguish between the unemployed and employed people seeking a change of employment.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend accept that I find his answer deeply disappointing? Does he agree that it is scandalous that in the 14 travel-to-work areas with unemployment of less than 8 per cent., where there are 138,000 people drawing unemployment benefit, only 14,000 people are registered at jobcentres, and that in Slough, of 4,500 unemployed people, only 210—less than 1 in 20—are on the register? What will he do about that scandal?

Mr. Lang: I take careful note of the point made by my hon. Friend. In his constituency, the Government already assist through the national priority scheme and the adult training strategy in the short term and through YTS in the long term. He might also like to know that the European Community is interested in promoting a study on skill shortages in the Thames Valley area.

Mr. Ralph Howell: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his appointment. I am disappointed that he replied in the way that he did, when only about 12 per cent. of unemployed people register at jobcentres. Does he agree that an unemployed person who cannot be bothered to register at a jobcentre is not keen to obtain a job? Will he assure the House that closer links will be established between unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres and that it will be necessary for all unemployed people to register at jobcentres?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words of welcome. I listened with interest to what he said because of the authority that he brings to the subject. I am sure he will agree, however, that compulsory registration is not a cost-effective way of testing availability. Although we are unhappy about the adequacy of the present work test, the Manpower Services Commission has reported that in 1984-85 there were over 14 million substantive contacts at jobcentres.

Mr. Eastham: The Minister trots out the figures for skill shortages, but is he aware that the Conservative Government decided to close down the skill-centres—the places that would answer some of the needs of the nation?

Mr. Lang: I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware of the care with which jobcentres try to match job seekers to job vacancies. They circulate details of hard-to-fill vacancies and maintain a computer bank of vacancies likely to be hard to fill locally.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that some of his Tory friends who speak about people not registering for jobs have a cheek, when between them they have more than 700 moonlighting jobs, directorships and consultancies, and some of those Members do not have the guts to register their jobs in the Members' Register of Interests?

Mr. Lang: I am not sure of the relevance of the hon. Gentleman's supplementary to the question. The Government are as anxious as he is to do something about unemployment. We are bringing as many and varied measures to bear on the problem as we can.

Mr. Butterfill: Is my hon. Friend aware of the widespread problem in the tourism and leisure sectors? A glance in my local paper reveals that the number of jobs available substantially exceeds those looking for them. Will my hon. Friend take steps to convince people that jobs in the tourist industry and the service sector in general are worth while and real jobs that should be taken up?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The importance of the service sector cannot be overlooked.

Youth Training Scheme

5. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in promoting the YTS.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 27 January my right hon. and noble Friend, together with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission, the director general of the CBI and the general secretary of the TUC launched an advertising campaign to promote the new two-year YTS.

Mr. Hughes: Have not the Government yet again had to resort to using actors, this time to promote the YTS? Does that not demonstrate the implausibility of the miserable sums that are on offer?

Mr. Clarke: The advertising is necessary to ensure that we have people, including employers, coming forward to provide the training that we want and also to make young people generally aware of what is on offer now that we are going for a two-year good quality training programme available to all of them. I do not know what the hon. Member means by "miserable sums". By 1987-88 we shall have passed the £1 billion mark each year in spending on youth training.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is imperative that the unions support the YTS? Is he aware that there are 50 youngsters engaged in YTS in Norfolk county council whose second year is being threatened by the National and Local Government Officers Association? Will my right hon. and learned Friend have a word with NALGO and give it a prod?

Mr. Clarke: The TUC supports the YTS and the scheme is run by the Manpower Services Commission, on which there are three trade union representatives as commissioners, including such leading figures as the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union. I agree that some unions still prove to be difficult in practice in some localities, and NALGO is less than helpful. However, I do not have the influence on NALGO that the Opposition might have if they took a more constructive view.

Mr. Foot: Has the right hon. and learned Gentleman had a chance to look at the matter that I raised with him two or three weeks ago—the extra burden that is being put on local authorities to bear part of the burden for the YTS? How much of the burden is being put on local authorities? When the transitional payments are exhausted, will the Minister take steps to ensure that the

whole burden is borne by the central Exchequer rather than by local authorities with the highest unemployment in the land?

Mr. Clarke: Local authorities are supported in the same way as other employers, and the contribution made to the employers must reflect the fact that, certainly in the second year, the trainees are often adding some value to their service or business. One of the main problems faced by local authorities comes from NALGO, as my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) said, because payments to young trainees need to be topped up far above the necessary levels. Therefore, the local authorities saddle themselves with unnecessary wage levels. That is a matter between the local authorities and NALGO. There is no reason why central Government funding should contribute to such payments.

Mr. Terlezki: Does my right hon. and learned Friend not find it very difficult to promote the YTS when the Opposition invariably try to discourage young people by stating that it is slave labour? They know nothing about slave labour whatsoever. They should encourage young people to join the YTS.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The payment made to trainees on the YTS reflects the fact that they are in training. It is a realistic payment for those going straight from school and receiving their first training at work. Sixty per cent. of them go straight to jobs when they have completed their training. The Opposition's position is quite ridiculous. They say, through clenched teeth, that they support the two-year YTS, but then, as my hon. Friend says, they launch into destructive publicity which puts young people off.

Mr. Prescott: I congratulate the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment on joining the Front Bench. It coincides with a time when much of the responsibility of the Department is being transferred to another place.

When the Paymaster General had direct responsibility for the Manpower Services Commission, did he endorse the appointment of the Tory public relations agency, Saatchi and Saatchi, whose black propaganda reminded us at the election that Labour policies were not working, when unemployment was a third of what it is today? Did the Paymaster General also endorse the propaganda in the national newspapers to the effect that apparently Japan has to look out for Spikey Dodds in a youth training scheme which has fewer resources, qualifications and job opportunities when compared with YTS in other countries?

Mr. Clarke: I have given the reason why we are promoting and advertising the youth training scheme. We want the providers of good quality training and young people to know what is on offer, because they will benefit from it. It would be absurd to spend £1 billion on the programme and to spend nothing to promote the programme that that money makes available.

On the matter of Spikey Dodds and Japan, I think it is important to underline the fact that this country has to be competitive in an international market which is very often dominated by Japan. Better quality training for our young people and a more skilled work force will help us to achieve that.

Mr. Cyril Smith: I want to refer to the question of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) on the cost to local authorities of the YTS. In my constituency it is over £500,000 a year. If one accepts that authorities should contribute, can the Minister at least persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that such expenditure should not be subject to rate capping?

Mr. Clarke: Much local government expenditure does not arise directly from the youth training scheme or the Government's rules for it. Such expenditure arises from the fact that local authorities give way to political pressure and pay wage rates to those being trained which are higher than necessary and higher than those provided by many private employers. I cannot stop local authorities from doing that. It is absurd to suggest that we should divert money from our training budget to subsidise local authorities which do that.

Solihull

6. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate the extent to which unemployment has fallen in the Solihull constituency since 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The number of unemployed claimants in the Solihull parliamentary constituency fell 1·1 per cent. between 12 January 1984 and 9 January 1986. Male unemployment fell by 10·5 per cent. over the same period. There is an extensive range of Government assistance to attract new investment and new jobs to the west midlands.

Mr. Taylor: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply, and welcome the trend in Solihull. However, may I ask him to have a word with his right hon. and hon. Friends at the Department of Trade and Industry in case General Motors' proposal for Land Rover in Solihull reverses that welcome trend?

Mr. Lang: I thank my hon. Friend for his welcome and take note of his advice. My hon. Friend might like to know that in the Birmingham travel-to-work area unskilled vacancies have risen by 4,588 — up 47 per cent. on January 1985.

Labour Statistics

7. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Paymaster General how many people were unemployed in May 1979; and how many are currently unemployed in the United Kingdom.

13. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 9 January the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,407,700. An estimated 1,218,900 people were claiming unemployment benefits in May 1979.

Mr. Powell: I am surprised that the Paymaster General can adopt an attitude of complacency when he is announcing such figures to the House. In Ogmore, the unemployment figure was 3·7 per cent. in 1979. It is now 18·7 per cent., and in some areas 25 per cent. of the work force are out of work. When will the Minister listen to my right hon. Friend the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, who suggested in his speech last weekend that if we began

to spend money on roads, schools, hospitals, sewers and other social improvements, unemployment might be substantially reduced? The unemployment figure is as frightening to my constituents as was the Prime Minister's speech last night, when she said that she would continue in office. If she continues in office much longer, everybody will be unemployed by the time she leaves it.

Mr. Clarke: There has been a steady growth in employment since 1983 — *[Interruption]*. Of course there has. Obviously we need to generate more employment to tackle the problem. The hon. Gentleman's constituency has been affected by coal mining closures. I do not know to what extent he believes that Ogmore's problems will be solved by spending more money on roads, schools, houses and the other projects which his right hon. Friend the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer appears to think will solve all our problems. I trust that the work of the new enterprise agency and the training schemes that are being promoted by the National Coal Board in South Wales will have the effect of stimulating again the economy of the valleys.

Mr. Allen McKay: When does the Paymaster General expect the growth in employment to reach my constituency where unemployment is over 20 per cent.? When does he expect the unemployment figure to peak, and at what figure? When does he expect that figure to return to the level at which it stood in 1979?

Mr. Clarke: The number of people who are being placed in jobs by our jobcentre in the Barnsley travel-to-work area is increasing substantially, although it needs to be further increased. By coincidence, the hon. Gentleman also represents a coal mining constituency. I hope that he will encourage his constituents to take more advantage than they have done so far of the training oportunities that are provided by our skillcentres, financed by the National Coal Board, which will help to revive the economy of the area.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Is my right hon. and learned Friend absolutely certain that these figures are accurate? In Bracknell in my constituency 7 per cent. of the work force is allegedly unemployed, yet at the jobcentre there is a large number of unfilled vacancies. All the employers express concern that they cannot find the right kind of people for the jobs for which they advertise.

Mr. Clarke: I am satisfied that the figures are accurate when people understand clearly what they represent. We are always quite clear when we say what it is that we are measuring. I agree with my hon. Friend that there are large parts of the country, particularly in the south and in the midlands, where it is perplexing to find that there are large numbers of unemployed people when employers say that they are short of labour. When we try out new schemes in pilot areas, we discover that considerable success can be achieved by directing the long-term unemployed to jobs or to training after they have been contacted and given help and support.

Mr. Budgen: Will my right hon. and learned Friend estimate how many people would price themselves into work if the wages councils were to be abolished?

Mr. Clarke: The estimates vary between 8,000 and 300,000. We have made proposals for the reform of the wages councils, but I agree with my hon. Friend that when setting the rate of pay for jobs one must take into account the fact that people will be paid for jobs so long as their pay does not exceed the value that they add to the business.

Mr. Wigley: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell my constituents in the county of Gwynedd, where unemployment is over 20 per cent., and where there have been no coalmine closures, how countries such as Sweden and Norway are able to keep their unemployment at a fraction of ours and why we have failed completely to bring ours down?

Mr. Clarke: I do not have time to debate the experience of Sweden, which is not quite so straightforward and untroubled as the hon. Gentleman implies. The problem of rising unemployment exists throughout western Europe. Many countries are taking the same measures as ourselves, and many of them are imitating the measures that we have taken on both the economic and employment fronts. We are creating more new employment in this country than is being created in the rest of the European Community put together.

Mr. Nicholls: Will my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one can make sense of the unemployment statistics only if one looks at the employment statistics? If one person in seven is unemployed, it means that 86 per cent. of the work force are employed, and that this country has a greater proportion of its work force in work than any other European country. —*[Interruption.]* Should not my right hon. and learned Friend be emphasising that point as well?

Mr. Clarke: Shouts drowned my hon. Friend's valuable last point, which is that a higher proportion of people are in work in this country than in any other western European country. It is also the case, of course, that the size of our labour force is still growing, which is why, although we are creating many new jobs, we are still having difficulty in getting on top of the unemployment figures.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Paymaster General accept that the growth in population during the period for which the Labour party was in office was twice as great as in this Government's period of office? I ask him this simple question. While most of the increases in jobs have been in part-time equivalents, can he put that into full-time equivalents and accept, as the Bank of England does, that, with the increase in jobs which we have seen since 1983, it would take over 50 years to reach the level of employment that his Government inherited in 1979?

Mr. Clarke: Demography, I agree, has acted against both Governments, Labour and Conservative. There is a growth in the labour market, it is continuing, and it will end, I think, in three or four years' time. The fact remains that the Labour Government presided over a doubling in the rate of unemployment and left us deep in a recession and a financial and economic crisis which helped to make unemployment worse in the two years that followed. I cannot, without notice, turn part-time figures into full-time equivalents. The growth in part-time employment in the country goes back way into the 1970s. There has been a growth in part-time employment here and in other countries. It reflects changing social patterns. It is no good the hon. Gentleman trying to dismiss part-time employment, which is wanted by many people, as though part-time employees are not genuinely in jobs.

8. **Mr. Park** asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the total number of people currently in full-time employment; and what were the comparable figures for May 1979.

Mr. Lang: Estimates of full-time and part-time male employees in employment are not separately available for these dates. There were 16,450,000 male employees and female full-time employees in employment in Great Britain in September 1985. The comparable figure for June 1979 was 18,777,000.

Mr. Park: We are frequently told in the House about a recovery, which has apparently been going on for several years. When will this recovery make an impact on the employment figures, since in my constituency there are areas where unemployment levels are at 36 per cent.?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member is unduly gloomy, because the information for which he asks paints an incomplete picture. His question ignores the fact that part-time female jobs are up over 500,000 since the 1979 election, and the numbers of self-employed are up by some 750,000 since June 1979.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Will my hon. Friend recognise the fact that if it were not for the huge increase in the size of the work force over the past three or four years, unemployment would be substantially lower than it is now? Why does he think that Opposition Members are not prepared to recognise this?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The labour market has increased by some 1·75 million in the last decade. The Opposition ought to recognise that fact.

Mr. James Lamond: Is the Minister aware that unemployment in the north-west of England is considerably above the national average and is under further threat because of the very weak MFA which has been negotiated by his Government, as is well known to some of the members of his ministerial staff?

Mr. Lang: I quite understand that there are areas in the country where the unemployment problem is very much more serious than it is in others. That is why the Government have designed a wide range of schemes to try to tackle the deep-rooted problems.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend accept that the long-term potential for employment in the country is probably better now than it has ever been for the last 25 years because of the Government's policy relating to inflation and trade union reform? Will he do his best to ensure that the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not introduce any measures in the Budget, such as increasing dramatically excise and tax on hydrocarbons, which might prejudice the future potential for employment?

Mr. Lang: I note my hon. Friend's point and will certainly refer it to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that keeping the inflation rate down is of predominant importance, and is crucial in creating new employment.

Youth Training Scheme

9. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Paymaster General what will be the qualifications that trainees receive after completion of the two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: Our aim is that all YTS trainees should have the opportunity to obtain or work towards a recognised vocational qualification. To help in this aim, we are establishing a new YTS certification board whose job it will be to ensure that there are relevant qualifications suitable for trainees of all abilities.

Mr. Leighton: Following the advertising campaign referred to earlier, may I ask whether the Minister has any evidence that the Japanese are frightened by the progress of YTS in Britain? Will he admit that, were that to be the case, the scheme would have to reach the level of higher education? Does he agree that the credibility of YTS will depend upon the quality of training? Can he give us an assurance that, after two years' YTS, each trainee will receive a valuable qualification which will be a module towards a recognised vocational qualification?

Mr. Trippier: I do not know whether the Japanese are frightened by YTS, but they will be as impressed with it as are Conservative Members. Of course we are anxious that all people on the YTS scheme should have a certificate. They should receive certificates in the form that I mentioned in reply to an earlier question. As a result of the appointment of the new certification board, we hope to improve the qualification. In addition to the certificate, 39 per cent. of those who complete YTS courses qualify for other qualifications.

Mr. Greenway: Will my hon. Friend accept my thanks for the central role that he played in a highly successful conference on education and training which I promoted in my constituency yesterday?

Mr. Rogers: Get off your knees.

Mr. Greenway: Get off your knees. Does my hon. Friend agree that a central message from the conference was that education and training should be brought together? What will he do towards that end?

Mr. Trippier: That question gives me the opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on organising a seminar in his constituency, which was yet another example of what can be done. He brought together industrialists and educationists, which is a major theme of Industry Year 1986.

Ms. Richardson: Does the Minister recognise that young women on YTS courses do not always get the same, limited, training as do young men, and that they often emerge with fewer qualifications? What can he do to improve this scheme and their chances?

Mr. Trippier: I am anxious to meet the point that the hon. Lady draws to my attention. I hope that the certification board will do that, but I shall consider that problem. If she wishes to raise specific examples with me, I shall be happy to consider them.

Young Worker Scheme

10. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Paymaster General what is the best available estimate of the number of new jobs which were created for young people as a result of the wage cuts induced by the young worker scheme; and how many of these were previously adult jobs.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: About 90,000 new jobs for young people resulted directly from the scheme, according to our latest estimates. None of this number involved the substitution of young people in place of older workers.

Mr. Fraser: Does not the evidence given to the Select Committee, including that from the Minister's Department, show that about 80 per cent. of the jobs that were found for young people came from older people? Is there not a more constructive way of providing jobs than throwing someone else off the roundabout?

Mr. Clarke: The figure that I gave is the one that we calculated, making allowance for any displacement that is caused by such a scheme. It was highly successful and helped to contribute to the fact that unemployment among young people has been decreasing steadily for the past three years.

Ms. Clare Short: The Paymaster General is misleading the House, I am sure inadvertently. The evidence shows clearly that about 80 per cent. of the jobs that were subsidised would have existed anyway. Of the 10 per cent. of new jobs for young people, the overwhelming majority were adults' jobs. Does the Minister concede that, given those facts, his claim that exempting youngsters from the protection of wages councils will generate jobs is palpably false?

Mr. Clarke: All that I can say in response to the hon. Lady is that it depends on which facts and evidence one takes into account. The figure that I gave was reached by those who provided most of the material for the study of the young workers' scheme. After making allowances for inevitable displacement, the scheme created 90,000 new jobs. There is clear evidence of a reduction in youth unemployment, largely because we are returning to more realistic pay levels for school leavers and because of the growth of the two-year youth training scheme.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Paymaster General what is the estimated number of new job opportunities currently being created each month; what was the corresponding figure 12 months ago; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The latest available estimates show that there was a net increase of 10,000 monthly in the employed labour force during the third quarter of 1985. This compares with an average monthly increase of 23,000 in the same period 12 months ago. There have now been 10 successive quarterly rises in the number of jobs, leading to a net increase of 709,000 since March 1983.

Mr. Hicks: I welcome that trend, but does my hon. Friend agree that, because of job losses, we must have still greater investment in labour-intensive activities such as house building and home improvements, and that the Government must accept their responsibility in those areas?

Mr. Lang: I note what my hon. Friend says. I am sure that he would not want to underestimate the amount of public and private capital expenditure that is taking place and that he agrees that the overriding concern must be to keep inflation low, as inflation destroys many jobs.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Gould** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagments for Tuesday 18 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Turkey.

Mr. Gould: Will the Prime Minister confirm what she appeared to say on television last night—that a firm such as Land Rover must choose between being British and being successful? Is it this despair about the future of British industries which makes her so keen to act as a broker for American interests in the proposed sale of Land Rover?

The Prime Minister: I am anxious that there should be good jobs here in companies here which have a great future. I am anxious that Land Rover and Freight Rover should have as big a market and as big a distribution service as possible, and I believe that we must consider the bids that have been made.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Will my right hon. Friend find time today to congratulate Balfour Beatty on the successful conclusion of a joint venture with Japan to build a hydroelectric plant in Sri Lanka? Is this not a way forward in which we can balance our substantial trade imbalance with Japan and help the developing world?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend knows that this will be the second dam project with which we have assisted in Sri Lanka. The earlier project on the Victoria dam was extremely successful. The present one has been assisted by overseas aid and will bring great prosperity to Sri Lanka. I hope that it augurs well that we are co-operating with Japan.

Mr. Steel: As it now seems clear that going ahead with the Trident missile programme means jeopardising a successful deal between the United States and the Soviet Union on nuclear weapons in Europe, will the Prime Minister tell our American allies that she is willing to give up this expensive and unilateral escalation of British nuclear firepower?

The Prime Minister: No. I think that the right hon. Gentleman has fallen for Soviet Union propaganda. There is no question of Britain giving up her independent nuclear deterrent, and there is no question of the Trident programme being involved.

Mr. John Carlisle: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as hon. Members enjoy freedom of speech and the right to reply in this place, that same right should be allowed to hon. Members in universities and places of further education?

The Prime Minister: The whole House will sympathise with my hon. Friend on the nasty incidents that he has experienced. I believe and hope that the whole House agrees that upholding freedom of speech in our institutions of higher education is vital and that we would like to express our view to that effect. I hope that the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals will make strenuous efforts to ensure that that right is upheld, so that hon. Members can speak freely at universities. Freedom of speech consists of being able to say things that are not acceptable to everyone.

Q2. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Prime Minister recognise that what is happening in the British computer industry, in Westland, and perhaps even in British Leyland are not isolated events, but are part of a determined effort by American industrial power to influence what happens in British industry? Have the Government any policy to counter that?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman has referred to the British computer industry, I hope he realises that the Government have done a good deal to help ICL during its days of difficulty. I hope he will also recognise that many American companies have provided jobs, especially in development areas. I hope he will do nothing to stop that process.

Mr. Hayes: Will my right hon. Friend take the opportunity to condemn the violence and intimidation that are occurring on the picket lines at Wapping, particularly against the police? Will she try to persuade the leaders of SOGAT '82 and the National Graphical Association to take a leaf out of the book of the Leader of the Opposition and root out some of the extremists in their organisations?

The Prime Minister: Yes. We totally condemn the violence that has been occurring, and which we saw on the television screens on Saturday night, arising from the demonstrations outside Wapping. We understand that the majority were not thought to be printers. Nevertheless, it is disgraceful that they should attack the police. We totally support the police.

Mr. Kinnock: In condemning violence wherever it occurs, will the Prime Minister also acknowledge the contribution made by the leaders of SOGAT and the NGA to try to stop violence, and the way in which they have roundly condemned those who bring their unions and their activities into disrepute? When seven years of the Prime Minister's continuing policies have brought record and rising unemployment, record real interest rates, a record manufacturing trade deficit and a record tax burden, and when she tells the country that she will not change, is she not showing complete contempt for the people?

The Prime Minister: I recognise what the right hon. Gentleman said, and I am glad that he totally condemns violence — I hope on each and every picket line or demonstration where it occurs. I should be grateful if he would confirm that. I also point out that this Administration have carried out policies that have led to a record standard of living, record production and output, record expenditure on and a record number of patients treated under the Health Service and a record standard of living for pensioners.

Mr. Kinnock: Looking at all of industry and at unemployment, is not the biggest record that of the wreckage that the right hon. Lady has brought?

The Prime Minister: In the last two years, as the right hon. Gentleman will have heard from questions shortly before Prime Minister's Question Time, a record number of jobs have been created. We have a better record than any other country in Europe, with 700,000 jobs in the last two years. That, together with efficient industry, is the way to get more jobs.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Argentine Members of Parliament who are visiting Britain should be made to feel extremely welcome, but told that sovereignty is not available for discussion, and that the way forward between our two countries is to negotiate the commercial exploitation of the area around the Falkland Islands?

The Prime Minister: I understand that Argentine Members of Parliament are in this country. We have done our best as a Government to restore commercial relations with Argentine to a normal basis, but our efforts have not met with reciprocation from the Argentine. I wish to make it absolutely clear that the sovereignty of the Falklands is not negotiable and that the wishes of the Falkland Islanders are and will remain paramount.

Afghanistan

Q3. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Prime Minister if she will seek to meet President Babrak Karmal to discuss his proposals for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan.

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I have no wish to meet the leader of a regime which depends on an occupying force of 115,000 Soviet troops for its survival.

Mr. Brown: While the Prime Minister's knee jerk response was to be expected, does she not realise that a negotiated settlement is possible provided her Government stop aiding the counter-revolutionaries, which is now costing this country over £3 million per year—and it has not been rate-capped? More important, does she not appreciate that Karmal can use tribal power against Zia? The problems of Afghanistan will be small indeed compared to the problems of Pakistan. I suggest — *[Interruption.]*—that the sooner a settlement is reached the better.

The Prime Minister: People who are citizens of an occupied country have a right to fight for their country. If the hon. Gentleman really wants peace, he should assist the Secretary-General's efforts to find a settlement by negotiating the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan without more ado.

Mr. Churchill: Will my right hon. Friend offer her congratulations to the valiant people of Afghanistan on their six-year fight for national liberation against the most powerful war machine in the world? Will she confirm that there is nothing standing in the way of the Soviet Union withdrawing its forces, and that there is nothing to discuss with Mr. Babrak Karmal except possibly which country might offer him asylum once the Soviet forces have gone?

The Prime Minister: Nothing must deflect us from the important task of securing the withdrawal of Soviet occupying troops from Afghanistan. I appreciate what my hon. Friend says.

Mr. James Lamond *rose—[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a rare, definitive question.

Mr. Lamond: In the nauseating performance that we had to put up with on "Panorama" last night, was it necessary for the Prime Minister to make statements such as those that she has made today? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about Afghanistan.

Mr. Lamond: My question is about Afghanistan. The right hon. Lady says that she believes that people in an occupied country are entitled to fight for their freedom. Does the Prime Minister extend that same freedom to the people of South Africa, who are living in an occupied country, and whose leader, Nelson Mandela, has been in prison for more than 20 years?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman knows that the two countries are totally dissimilar. People of all colours in South Africa, whether white, coloured, Indian or black have a right to be there, and we believe that they should all have a right to take part in the government of their country. We deplore violence in that country as a means to that end.

Mr. Terlezki: In an excellent television programme we saw Mr. Shcharansky reunited with his dear wife after 12 years of separation. On Afghanistan, does my right hon. Friend not believe that it is high time this House told Mr. Gorbachev to withdraw his 115,000 troops from Afghanistan and take them back to where they belong, in the Soviet Union, and to free Afghan people so that they can fulfil their own destiny in their own country?

The Prime Minister: I agree wholeheartedly with what my hon. Friend has so aptly said.

Mr. Nellist: Given the Prime Minister's sudden attack of double standards over Afghanistan and South Africa, how does she feel about American intervention in Central America?

The Prime Minister: I had hoped that even the hon. Gentleman would agree that 115,000 Soviet occupying forces should be withdrawn from Afghanistan. Apparently he does not.

Q4. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lloyd: Which major industrial power would consider selling off its last significant domestic car producer to a foreign power? Does the right hon. Lady think that it is part of popular capitalism that she should act as a broker for the United States?

The Prime Minister: Austin Rover is a mass car producer. It has only 4 per cent. of the European market compared with other mass car producers, such as Renault, Volkswagen, Fiat, Ford and General Motors, which have between 10 and 12 per cent. of the market. Austin Rover therefore has difficulty in competing. That is the measure of the task. I hope that the company will succeed in obtaining more of the market. If there is a British bid for Austin Rover, we shall look at it carefully.

Q5. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Marlow: Can my right hon. Friend hazard a guess as to why Labour Members, and perhaps the odd Conservative Member, seem to think that there is something wrong with outward investment from Britain because, they say, it destroys jobs in this country, and yet at the same time they complain about inward investment, whether by General Motors, Sikorsky or any other such company?

The Prime Minister: I note my hon. Friend's cogent point. When we had inward investment, for example, with Nissan, half the Labour Members wanted the investment to go to their constituencies. They forget all that now.

British Ferries Ltd.

3.31 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the continuing difficulties of British Ferries Ltd. to negotiate access to the Belgian port of Zeebrugge and what reciprocal action he intends to take under sections 14 and 15 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1974.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): British Ferries Sealink has been in close touch with my Department about its wish to serve Zeebrugge, and I am therefore well aware of these problems. My noble Friend the Minister for shipping and I have discussed the problem with the Belgian Minister of Communications, and my officials have been in frequent and urgent contact with their Belgian counterparts. I cannot understand why the port of Zeebrugge has not responded to British Ferries' request for access. Depending on future events, I remain ready to act in support of British interests. At present, I have not ruled out any course of action.

Mr. Hughes: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that British Ferries was banned from Ostend? Does he agree that the lack of faith appears to be on the side of the Belgian port authorities rather than Sealink? Why has the right hon. Gentleman apparently agreed to European Ferries marketing the operations of British Ferries in Britain—the Regie des Transports Maritime operations—given that that is part of the move to freeze Sealink out of Belgium?

Is it not absolutely clear that we are dealing with restraints on trade imposed by the Belgians? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the only way in which we can deal with this problem is by taking action under sections 14 and 15 of the Merchant Shipping Act and banning Belgian ferries from Britain? Will he confirm that he can do that immediately without parliamentary approval? Does he agree that this action could last for 28 days by which time the matter would surely be resolved? Will he act to save the jobs of the 250 seafarers that are clearly at risk because of this dispute?

Mr. Ridley: I confirm that, when European Ferries and RMT came together, it resulted in the exclusion of British Ferries from Ostend. I have made every conceivable effort to help British Ferries gain access to the port of Zeebrugge. I am convinced from my conversations with the Belgian Minister of Communications that the Belgian Government are not frustrating its efforts. European Ferries is entitled to market its service in any way it wishes. What is offensive is the action to deny another competitor—British Ferries—the right to serve a Belgian port. That is the point on which I have concentrated throughout.

I confirm that I remain able to use section 14, if necessary. I understand that British Ferries may be modifying its proposed operation into Zeebrugge, which could change the situation. That is why it is difficult to take decisions before the position has been clarified.

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): My right hon. Friend knows about my continuing interest and concern in this matter. Does he regard the exclusion of a British ferry company from a Belgian port, such as Zeebrugge or Ostend, to be in breach of the fundamental principles and rules of the European Community?

Mr. Ridley: Yes, subject to the fact that it is operationally possible. There are operational difficulties which we have done our best to help the Belgians to solve. If British Ferries were to change its operational requirement, that would set up a new position, making matters more difficult. I remain determined to ensure that Belgian ports should be open to us if our ports are open to Belgian ferries.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Have the Government made representations via the European Commission and, if not, have they any intention of doing so?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir. This is a bilateral matter.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): For how long has the Secretary of State been in contact with the Belgian Government over this matter? Seamen's jobs are at stake and we are most anxious to see a speedy resolution. If necessary, we expect strong action from the Government.

Mr. Ridley: The matter has been going on since before Christmas. We have been frequently in touch with the Belgians at ministerial and official level. If necessary, I shall make contact again with my opposite number as soon as it is clear what the problem is. British Ferries submitted details of its operational plans a fortnight ago to Zeebrugge harbour. It has not yet received an acknowledgement, let alone a reply. I regard that as thoroughly unsatisfactory and discourteous. In view of the fact that British jobs are involved as well as ferry services to the Continent, I am taking the closest personal interest in the matter.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Is it not time that the Ministry took sterner action in view of the actions of the Belgian ports? They are not acting in the spirit and intent of agreements. I reinforce the point made by the Secretary of State that there has been more than one letter of communication between Sealink and the Belgian authorities. Every communication seems to be ignored.

Mr. Ridley: I welcome the interest of the House in this matter. Hon. Members' expressions of impatience at this treatment will strengthen my hand in achieving an early settlement.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is now a monopoly operating on any route between Belgium and Britain? Of its very nature, that must be unacceptable.

Mr. Ridley: That is another reason why I remain determined to find a solution to ensure that competition will continue between the English coast and the Belgian coast.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): As the Secretary of State has been aware of the problem since before Christmas and still has not been able to discover how to solve it, surely he should make a statement about when he is likely to implement the powers vested in him.

Mr. Ridley: It is a moving position and it is not one that has not changed. I would be happier to give an affirmative date for taking action if I were clear that British Ferries was not going to change its operational plans, thus changing the position.

Questions to Ministers

3.38 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have only two occasions, each of 15 minutes, during any working week when we can put questions to the Prime Minister. That is a maximum of 30 minutes in which to question the Prime Minister on her responsibilities for the nation's welfare. In view of today's display in response to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Nellist) when the Government Benches responded with a gesture clearly designed blatantly to waste time, is it possible for you, Mr. Speaker, to approach the appropriate authorities and, in accordance with the Rugby Football Union or the Football Association, seek some form of injury time that you might award at the end of Question Time?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that I do not give my reasons, but he may have noticed that today Prime Minister's questions continued until 3.31 pm. That was injury time.

Conventions of the House

3.40 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that yesterday the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) raised a point of order criticising me for having broken one of the conventions of the House. You will also recall that since I was elected to Parliament I have always been a great upholder of our conventions, traditions and, indeed, of you, Mr. Speaker.

Where the safety of children is involved, there may be times when one cannot act speedily and observe the niceties of the workings of the House. I spoke out on a particular issue, but not from the information from only one informant. It leaves a nasty taste in my mouth to be criticised for protecting children by the hon. Gentleman who introduced members of the IRA into the House.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This sort of exchange does not help our proceedings. I dealt with the matter yesterday. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) was present. Irrespective of the speed with which events occur, the conventions of the House are important.

Mr. Corbyn: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it on order for the hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) to mislead the House about my remarks yesterday? I criticised him, not for not informing me of what he was doing in my constituency, although that would have been the decent thing to do, but for irresponsibly passing unfounded allegations to the media, who then crawled all over an estate and caused a great deal of hardship and hurt to the people of the area. It is the hon. Gentleman's irresponsible behaviour which has upset the residents of the area. They are demanding strongly that he visits the estate and apologises publicly to them.

Mr. Speaker: There is an early-day motion on the Order Paper about the matter, and that is the right way to deal with it.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It should go on record that this is not the first time that this has happened. The hon. Member for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) knows of a similar incident in my constituency when I received complaints from a clergyman on behalf of his parishioners protesting about the hon. Gentleman's conduct, which I raised in the House. It is time that the hon. Gentleman observed the courtesy of informing the hon. Members concerned.

Mr. Dickens *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall give the hon. Gentleman one more opportunity, but not to prolong the matter.

Mr. Dickens: I shall not detain the House. I wish to place on record the fact that arrests and prosecutions have resulted from information that I have provided in the past.

Greater London County Hall

3.43 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to prohibit the disposal of Greater London County Hall by the London Residuary Body until after 31st December 1988; to exempt Greater London County Hall from the provisions of section 100 of the Local Government Act 1985; and for connected purposes.

There are two main elements to the Bill. The first relates to the importance of the building that is Greater London county hall, and the second to the importance that it has had, has at present and can have in future as a building to serve the people of London, our capital city and the nation as a whole.

I should like to begin with a brief description of the building. County hall was built on a site which was previously derelict marshland that was acquired by the London county council in 1905. An architectural competition was held in 1907 and a unanimous choice was made by the assessors that the architect, Mr. Ralph Knott, should design a building to house London administration.

That scheme was accepted in February 1908 and thereafter construction began. The foundation stone of the main building was laid by His Majesty King George V in 1912 and the building was opened by the King in 1922. The building was completed in 1933.

There are also ancillary buildings, additional blocks other than the main building. Hon. Members will know that the whole structure was completed as the headquarters for the administration of London. That event was commemorated by a visit and an unveiling by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in November 1963. Since the passing of London administration from the London county council to the Greater London council, the building has remained as the centre administering London's affairs. County hall is also well known to hon. Members, as it houses the Inner London education authority.

The building is clearly of architectural importance. It was made a grade II listed building by the Minister of Works in 1951, the year I was born. The main reasons which justified that decision were the exterior and the principal floor. However, the whole building is listed.

Certain parts of the building are without doubt exceptional as contributions to the heritage of the city of London and of the country. The west door and the chairs behind the west door of the council chamber are made of oak believed to be some thousands of years old. The chamber walls are marble and the pillars were quarried in the Italian Alps. There is also Belgian marble in the building.

The whole building, the chamber, the reception areas and many of the rooms on the principal floor make up a building which Londoners have, from its erection, been proud to see as their administrative headquarters. At the head of the main staircase there are the names and coats of arms of successive lords lieutenant of the county of London since 1889. Inside the building there are conference rooms, committee rooms, exhibition halls and interview rooms as well as all the other ancillary, administrative offices. There is a ceremonial suite and a members' terrace.

The building has always been recognised for its importance and was most recently discussed in the Local Government Bill which became the Local Government Act 1985. During the Bill's passage, two matters were raised which I hope mean that what I ask today is in accord with the information given in the Committee at the time.

Under section 62 of the Act, the residuary property of the GLC, including county hall, passes to the residuary body which will take over that function on 1 April 1986. The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young)—accepted the importance of the building and that there should be no hasty decision about its future use. He said:

"The important point is that County Hall should be put to good use. It will be the responsibility of the London residuary body to ensure that that happens . . . They and the staff of the residuary body will need to continue in occupation for a time. Our intention is that at an early stage the London residuary body will institute a feasibility study of the possible future uses of the building."

The Under-Secretary of State later said:

"The freeholds of factory estates will transfer to the residuary body. The procedure for the county halls is roughly the same. They would transfer to the residuary body which would then consult and carry out a feasibility study on the best future use for that building."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee G*, 28 February 1985; c. 1818].

I seek time for the London ratepayers—the people who pay for the building — local government and Parliament to consult properly and for the London Residuary Body to be properly appraised of the uses to which people wish the building to be put.

My Bill aims to keep the building in the hands of the London Residuary Body until 31 December 1988. That gives two and a half years in which the building could be used. It should not be kept in mothballs. As the law stands, it could be sold after 1 April. That would go not just against the spirit of what the Government intended when they introduced the Bill but against the wishes of the vast majority of Londoners, people interested in architecture, and the people of Britain.

My Bill would prevent the immediate sale of county hall. It would preserve it in public ownership for people to make a considered judgment about its future, separate from the issue of abolition. This is the issue which will confront people immediately. My Bill would give adeqate time for Parliament, local government and public bodies to consider whether they have a use for county hall before a decision is taken which could irreversibly lose it to the public domain.

The Bill would not, because it could not, prevent such a decision, but nor would it preserve county hall in mothballs. In the interim, the London Residuary Body would be under a duty to offer the building for use by bodies such as ILEA, the London joint and co-ordinating comittees and all other regional and public bodies which might be interested in it. I am not entirely serious when I say that it could possibly be used until our additional buildings are completed. It would help with the inadequate accommodation provided for hon. Members in this building

The Bill's purpose is to give the public services a chance to exercise a claim to the site and this historic, listed and important building. It would impose that duty on the London Residuary Body.

There are one or two pragmatic reasons for such a move. The London Residuary Body will employ many people. They must be housed. ILEA will continue, although in a new form. The county hall computer could

not be easily moved. If ILEA and other bodies were to move out of the main building, many of the functional aspects of the complex would remain in the main building —the boiler house, the kitchens and the like.

The inscriptions around the council chamber and elsewhere signify that the building should remain in public ownership. The building has been converted to be as available as possible to many people.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Even the SDP.

Mr. Hughes: I am being tempted from behind. It would be available to all the political parties. Disabled people can get in easily to use the building.

When it was announced that I would be seeking leave to introduce the Bill, I received a letter, and I shall end by quoting from it.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Only one?

Mr. Hughes: I have received several letters, but I shall quote from this one which comes from someone in Basildon:

"Dear Simon, subject County Hall"—

[Interruption.] The letter is not from someone I have ever met, a relative, or a friend—

"I share your concern over the future of County Hall. So much so that I wrote a letter to the Private Secretary to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales over this same issue. He replied knowing of the Prince's deep concern over this important building in the capital. What worries me is that at some future date some speculator will come along and buy up the whole shooting match and, to quote one of the Prince's favourite terms 'put up some preposterous'"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is straying. We never introduce the Royal Family in support of our arguments in this place.

Mr. Hughes: I strayed in quoting. I apologise, as I did not propose to suggest that the Royal Family were unanimously behind me, although I hope that they would be. The writer continued by reminding us how county hall grew out of what was a swampy flooded Thames river site in the 1920s. He revealed that he originally came from the best constituency of all, my own, Southwark and Bermondsey. The writer concluded that, if we froze the issue for two years, we would

"give time for the authorities to make up their minds as to what will happen to that fine building in the future".

I hope that the House will give us the time to make the best decision about an important building in the interests of Londoners, ratepayers and the country.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. John Cartwright, Mr. Tony Banks and Mr. Edward Leigh.

Greater London County Hall

Mr. Simon Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to prohibit the disposal of Greater London County Hall by the London Residuary Body until after 31st December 1988; to exempt Greater London County Hall from the provisions of section 100 of the Local Government Act 1985; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April and to be printed. [Bill 86.]

Orders of the Day

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 2

CASES IN WHICH RESTRAINT ORDERS AND CHARGING ORDERS MAY BE MADE

'(1) The powers conferred on the High Court by sections 6(1) and 7(1) of this Act are exercisable where—

(a) proceedings have been instituted in England and Wales against the defendant for a drug trafficking offence,

(b) the proceedings have not been concluded, and

(c) the court is satisfied that there is reasonable cause to believe that the defendant has benefited from drug trafficking.

(2) Those powers are also exercisable where the court is satisfied—

(a) that an information is to be laid under section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 that a person has or is suspected of having committed a drug trafficking offence, and

(b) that there is reasonable cause to believe that he has benefited from drug trafficking.

(3) For the purposes of sections 6 and 7 of this Act, at any time when those powers are exercisable by virtue only of subsection (2) above—

(a) references in this Act to the defendant shall be construed as references to the person referred to in subsection (2)*(a)* above,

(b) references in this Act to the prosecuting authority shall be construed as references to the person who the court is satisfied is to have the conduct of the proposed proceedings, and

(c) references in this Act to property available in respect of the defendant shall be construed as if, immediately before that time, proceedings had been instituted against the person referred to in subsection (2)*(a)* above for a drug trafficking offence.

(4) Where the court has made an order under section 6(1) or 7(1) of this Act by virtue of subsection (2) above, the court shall discharge the order if the proposed proceedings are not instituted within such time as the court considers reasonable.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 8 to 17.

Mr. Mellor: Perhaps I may set the scene for this afternoon's discussion. The Bill is supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It received an enthusiastic Second Reading and went into Committee. The evidence of the considerable good will that flows towards the Bill is the fact that the Bill completed its Committee stage in two sittings.

A number of significant issues were raised during those debates, and I gave a range of undertakings. I said that the Government would reflect on those issues and return to them on Report. That will be done either by amendments or by explanation as to why, in our judgment, amendments were not moved or, on reflection, were not desirable. The fruits of that reconsideration are in the two new clauses and a number of amendments in my name which we shall deal with this afternoon.

[Mr. Mellor]

There are certain other matters which were the subject of detailed discussion in Committee but which are not to be found in any of the amendments. I should like to take the opportunity on Third Reading to deal with the reasons why those matters have not been canvassed. I shall explain why we have, on reflection, decided that no change is needed or, as a result of further consideration, that it is not practicable at this stage to conclude our deliberations. I ask the indulgence of the House. I suggest that these matters should be addressed to another place. Of course, we would have the opportunity to reconsider the issue when the Bill returns.

In that context I mention clause 15 and the precise terms of the new laundering offence which were the subject of a good deal of discussion. Also, on Third Reading, I should like to consider the position in Scotland, which was of interest to a number of Scottish Members. The problems are first, the applicability of the Bill to Scotland and, secondly, the extent to which Scottish law will need to be changed to reflect the changes that have been made in England and Wales. It has not been possible simply to apply the provisions of the Bill to Scotland, because the Bill draws on the established parts of the English and Welsh legal system which are not common to the different legal system in Scotland. Some kind of dovetailing must be effected between the two systems, and that has been the subject of further active consideration.

4 pm

Hon. Members may recall that last Friday week a private notice question was raised by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who leads for the Opposition on home affairs matters. He asked about cocaine sniffing kits and invited the Government to give urgent attention to this matter. In response not only to that question, but to the obviously very widespread feeling in the House, I said that action should be considered urgently to clarify whether any provision in the present law could properly deal with this problem. In the event that the answer to that was in the negative, I said that we would consider whether a new provision could be drafted that might be suitable for incorporation in the Bill.

We have taken those discussions forward and further progress has been made. I shall describe that on Third Reading. I hope that there will be an opportunity for some discussion not outwith the rules of order as to whether it might be possible to make such changes to the Bill in the other place as would give effect to the widespread public feeling against retailers who seek to exploit the awful habit of taking cocaine by selling kits to facilitate that habit.

New clause 2 is a major new clause designed to meet an important point made in Committee by a number of hon. Members. I particularly mention the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), whom I am pleased to see in this place. In Committee and on Second Reading it was suggested that restraint and charging orders should be available before the institution of proceedings. As it stands, the Bill provides that the appropriate point at which application should be made to a High Court judge is either when a warrant for arrest has been granted, even though the application might be made before the warrant was executed, or, when arrest took place without a warrant, at that point.

It was forcefully stated by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and other hon. Members that it was inappropriate to tie this arrangement so closely to the issue of proceedings, on the basis that that might be rather late in the day to trigger an important power in the Bill. It might be at such a late stage that the potential defendant, the suspect, would have the opportunity to do what we know people have done in cases under the present arrangements. When they think that they are liable to be convicted of the offence, they take steps to divest themselves of their property or to move it out of the jurisdiction so that they cannot be touched by the English courts. We wish to address that point. We have rethought our position, and the new clause gives effect to that rethinking.

In practical terms there must be some link with a late stage in the proceedings, for a number of good reasons. First, it is a serious infringement of individual rights that property should be so restrained. That is a valid point and I do not abstain in any way from the enthusiastic advocacy of the need for this power in which I and many other hon. Members have been engaged for many months. However, this power cannot be given lightly because it is an interference with the liberty of the subject. Because this is a serious matter, we have given the power to a High Court judge, not to lesser judges. It will require the judge to take a balanced view as to whether it would be proper to make the order. Plainly, the only basis on which he can determine that it would be proper is if he is satisfied, on the merits, that there is evidence that the individual concerned has been involved in drug trafficking and has benefited from it.

New clause 2(1), which deals with the straightforward situation when proceedings have already been started, is not a matter of concern. Instead, clause 2(2) is the nub of the matter. It says that where proceedings have not started:

> "Those powers are also exercisable where the court is satisfied—
>
> *(a)* that an information is to be laid under section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 that a person has or is suspected of having committed a drug trafficking offence, and
>
> *(b)* that there is reasonable cause to believe that he has benefited from drug trafficking."

The police will be able to go to court at the point at which they have their tackle in order and are ready to move against the suspect. That has the advantage of pushing the application a day or two back from the point of arrest so that leakage of information is less likely. I know that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner) has, in the work that he has done on the Bill, placed enormous emphasis on the need for there to be due process, even though he has rightly been calling for new powers. We do not want to take advantage of the public climate to introduce legislation that does not have the appropriate checks and balances. We move a few days back from the original decision, but at the same time the judge will not want to make this order unless he is satisfied that the evidence exists.

I hope that I have met the spirit of the lively discussions that took place in Committee and that the new clause will commend itself to the House.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I shall not delay the House for more than a few minutes. I am grateful to the Minister for considering and producing so quickly a new and satisfactory provision that brings the civil type Mareva

injunction powers into the criminal jurisdiction relating to drugs. It is crucial that the police should have the opportunity of freezing the assets of the suspect before they move in to make the arrest. We shall find that the use of that power, supervised as it will be by a High Court judge, will lead to the seizure of substantial assets that would not otherwise have been seized. It will have the additional advantage of leading to the obtaining of important evidence that might not otherwise have been obtained against the suspect. Therefore, I hope that hon. Members will support the new clause.

Mr. Mellor: I thank the hon. and learned Gentleman for his welcome for the clause. We took very seriously his point about the Hodgson committee and its recommendation. The committee recommended that the order should be available once there was a prima facie case. We thought that there would be some cases in which the establishment of a prima facie case would be a rather stiffer test and therefore make restraint orders available at a later stage than the institution of proceedings. That is why we chose a formulation which is similar but not identical.

Perhaps I might point out, so that the House will know the care with which we have addressed the matter of creating powers with proper checks and balances, that subsection (4) of the new clause is worthy of consideration. It provides that the High Court must discharge any order it makes if, in the event, proceedings are not instituted within what it regards as a reasonable time. I think that it would be oppressive if a High Court judge granted the order sought on the basis that proceedings were shortly to be brought—I suspect that is the basis under which the power in subsection (2) will be exercised—and then found that proceedings had not been issued. There might come a point when a court would properly want to discharge the order.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 3

STATEMENTS RELATING TO DRUG TRAFFICKING

'(1) Where—

(a) there is tendered to the Crown Court by the prosecuting authority a statement as to any matters relevant to the determination whether the defendant has benefited from drug trafficking or to the assessment of the value of the proceeds of drug trafficking by him, and

(b) the defendant accepts to any extent any allegation in the statement, the court may, for the purposes of that determination and assessment, treat his acceptance as conclusive of the matters to which it relates.

(2) Where—

(a) a statement is tendered under subsection (1)*(a)* above, and

(b) the court is satisfied that a copy of the statement has been served on the defendant, the court may require the defendant to indicate to what extent he accepts each allegation in the statement and, so far as he does not accept any such allegation, to indicate any matters he proposes to rely on.

(3) If the defendant fails in any respect to comply with a requirement under subsection (2) above he may be treated for the purposes of this section as accepting every allegation in the statement apart from—

(a) any allegation in respect of which he has complied with the requirement, and

(b) any allegation that he has benefited from drug trafficking or that any payment or other reward is the proceeds of drug trafficking by him.

(4) Where—

(a) there is tendered to the Crown Court by the defendant a statement as to any matters relevant to determining the amount that might be realised at the time the confiscation order is made from property available in respect of the defendant, and

(b) the prosecuting authority accepts to any extent any allegation in the statement, the court may, for the purposes of that determination, treat the acceptance by the prosecuting authority as conclusive of the matters to which it relates.

(5) An allegation may be accepted or a matter indicated for the purposes of this section either—

(a) orally before the court, or

(b) in writing in accordance with Crown Court Rules.

(6) No acceptance by the defendant under this section that any payment or other reward is the proceeds of drug trafficking by him shall be admissible in evidence in any proceedings for an offence.'.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments 26 to 30.

Mr. Mellor: This is another substantial new clause which again emanates from the helpful discussion we had in Committee. It particularly focuses on points raised by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman will not mind my saying, and I am sure that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) will agree with me, that they had a very good morning in Committee and made a number of sage contributions to which we have responded. I think that the hon. Member for Erdington will agree with me when I say, "If only it were always so".

4.15 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile *rose*——

Mr. Mellor: Let me finish my little dig, then I shall give way to the hon. and learned Gentleman.

We were engaged until a very late hour last night on an important measure for animal welfare on which there was a similar measure of agreement between myself and the hon. Member for Erdington. The alliance was somewhat more dismally represented than on this Bill by the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock), who is no substitute for the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery. He was aided and abetted by the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). They received a fairly dusty response from the House, and I hope that they will attend a master class conducted by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery on how to make an effective contribution to non-partisan Bills. I suspect that they left the Chamber last night feeling rather aggrieved at the reception they received. I know that I can rely on the fairness of the hon. and learned Gentleman to agree that when he raises a good point we always take it seriously.

Mr. Carlile: Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the agreement in relation to my suggestions during the first meeting of the Committee caused me a good deal of anxiety? I shall ensure that his comments, which were very generous and which I appreciate, are not circulated to all alliance Members in this House or I may find that my views are rarely accepted by them.

Mr. Mellor: I should be glad to welcome the hon. and learned Gentleman to the Conservative Benches if the amount of agreement becomes embarrassing to his colleagues.

I shall address myself to the substantial new clause, which I hope is a sensible one. As it is a major new clause, perhaps I shall be forgiven if I go through it with a little care.

The new clause derives from the suggestion made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery in Committee. From the beginning, we had a provision in clause 2(2) enabling the prosecution to tender a statement to the court of what it believed to be the proceeds of the defendant's drug trafficking. The idea behind that is that in straightforward cases, where the amount of the proceeds is known to the prosecution, such a statement, if accepted by the defence, would provide a convenient way for the court to settle the amount of the confiscation order. There will be no need for complex discussions about the offender's property, how much he can prove to be legitimately acquired and so on.

I stress the importance of those practical matters because, as I hope those hon. Members who have practised in the courts will appreciate, it is easy to take a view that is too academic in such matters. Ultimately, we have to recognise that throughout the country hard-pressed and busy courts are sitting.

The Bill will entail a great deal of extra work for the prosecution, defence, judge and those who serve him in court and we have to try to fix upon procedures which will enable business to flow steadily and efficiently in the courts. They should not be procedures which will steamroller through an unjust result but procedures which allow the judge to receive the maximum help from the prosecution and defence. When matters are agreed, they can readily be disposed of. When they are not agreed and there is a dispute, the extent of the dispute can be properly defined and a proper discussion can ensue.

In that spirit, we always intended that the defence should have the right to challenge such a statement from the prosecution. I see that the hon. and learned Gentleman is sending a note to *Hansard*. Anything that is said about his colleagues must be absolutely right and I can well understand that.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery suggested that the defence should have the right to cross-examine the person making the statement and that the defence should have to give notice of the matters it wished to dispute. That finds its echo in the matters canvassed in the Roskill report on fraud. It is significant that many hon. Members who bring court experience to the debate recognise the need for court procedures, in many respects, to move into the 20th century. The hon. and learned Gentleman managed to achieve that in one subsection, but it has taken the Government a whole new clause. I think that suggests that we find it a more complex matter, but I hope that we have not been prolix for the sake of it.

Before I go through the subsections of the clause, I shall refer to the main points. The intention is still to provide a short cut for the court to settle the amount of the confiscation order. If the defence accepts a prosecution statement and the judge is satisfied, the calculations can end there. It is important to bear in mind that it is the judge who makes the decision and it should not be cooked up between the prosecution and defence. Just as in other issues which are resolved between the parties, we must leave the judge to intervene, if he feels that an improper arrangement has been made, and say that he will not accept it. If the defence says that it wishes to challenge parts of the statement, the undisputed parts will still provide some common ground and narrow the area about which arguments must be heard. That must be of considerable assistance to the court. The defence will have an express right to challenge and the prosecution will be notified of those matters which are to be disputed.

We have not provided a specific right of cross-examination because in the circumstances envisaged by the proposed new clause that would be part of normal court proceedings. Although the initial prosecution statement might well include hearsay, we think that it would be preferable for any cross-examination to be of witnesses providing first-hand evidence in the interest of the prosecution and the defence. I think that it very much arose out of the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and others.

In the new clause we have included a procedure that was not contained in the original Bill which seems to us to be a useful addition. The defendant is to be able to tender a statement as to the amount which might be realised from his property and from property in the hands of third parties which is liable to confiscation. If all or part of that statement is acceptable to the prosecution, that, too, will ease the task of the court in settling the amount of the confiscation order, particularly where the value of the property available is less than the assessed proceeds.

I intend to look in a little more detail at subsections (1) to (5) and then to make a special point about subsection (6). Subsection (1) provides for the prosecution to tender a statement to the court. The content of the statement is not specified in detail, but it must be relevant to determining whether the defendant has benefited from drug trafficking or to assessing the value of his proceeds.

It is envisaged that the statement would contain the prosecution's estimate of his proceeds, together with, wherever possible, information about the property that is alleged to be those proceeds: its value, the date when it was acquired and, where relevant, the amount and date of any expenditure alleged to have come from such proceeds. The new clause, like the present clause 2(2), does not require the prosecution to tender such a statement and in practice it will do so only in cases where it is satisfied that the full extent of the proceeds is known.

If the defence accepts any or all of the statement, the court may treat the accepted parts of the statement as conclusive. If the defence accepts the statement in full, the court is likely to impose straight away a confiscation order for the amount specified in the statement. That, in a nutshell, is the short procedure. It meets the point of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and the hon. Member for Erdington that we might be taking too hard a line with the small time user pushers by making these provisions apply to them as well as to the person whom we primarily intend to catch — the large scale drug trafficker.

We rejected the Hodgson committee's advice because we felt that we could not add the further complication of having to prove the value of the proceeds or of the drugs. We felt that this would be an impediment to justice. However, as a matter of common sense, where the individual concerned is a small user dealer — even though anybody who deals in drugs, for whatever motive, is a public menace and has to be dealt with—nobody

will want to bring all of the machinery that is intended to deal with the millionaire who has assets all over the place into play for the person who is operating from squatted property in central London or Glasgow.

Therefore, the subsection (1) procedure provides a short form whereby the prosecution, reading between the lines, will agree on a relatively limited sum which the defence will be able to accept. The matter will be primarily disposed of in relation either to punishment or to the opportunities of treatment for the individual. The financial side will not come into play to any great extent. I hope that subsection (1) of the new clause recognises that there is that kind of straightforward case and that it does not make a straight way crooked, as sometimes we manage to do in the provisions that we introduce. There will, however, be more complicated cases. They are addressed in the subsection.

Subsection (2) allows the court, if it is satisfied that a copy of the statement has been served on the defendant, to require him either to indicate his assent or to dissent from each allegation in the statement and, where he disagrees on any point, to indicate the matters upon which he intends to rely. This will have the advantage of narrowing down the areas of dispute while giving to the defendant the positive right of challenge and to the prosecution notice of how the defendant intends to disprove any element of the statement.

Although the provision sets no particular time limit on the serving of the statement upon the defendant, the court will need to be satisfied that the defendant has had sufficient time to consider it before he is required to give his response. The court will be able to adjourn, if necessary, although the aim of the provision is to try to ensure that these matters should be dealt with as far as possible before rather than after an adjournment. However, one has to recognise that adjournments will be necessary in certain instances. Where guilt or innocence is at issue, one cannot expect matters to be resolved with the consent of the defendant when the issue of whether he is a drug trafficker is contested.

Subsection (3) provides that unless the defendant disputes any allegation he may be regarded as accepting it. However—again I hope that this provides a check and balance safeguard that shows the respect we are paying to established court procedures—silence must not be taken as indicating acceptance of any allegation that he has benefited from drug trafficking or that any particular property is the proceeds of drug trafficking. Thus, if he is silent, he may be deemed to accept a statement that he owns a particular house, that it is worth £75,000 and that he acquired it four years ago; but he may not necessarily be deemed to accept, by silence alone, that it was the proceeds of drug trafficking. I hope that that is a clear and proper distinction. However, I should add that the assumption that it was the proceeds of drug trafficking will operate after he has accepted ownership, but he will retain his right to try to disprove the assumption. That dovetails neatly into the provisions that have already been agreed.

Subsection (4) provides a new and useful procedure whereby the defendant can offer to the court a statement about his property and its value and other property in the hands of third parties which is liable to confiscation. If the prosecution accepts all or part of that statement, the judge may regard that acceptance as conclusive. By providing a basis for settling the amount that might be realised, this procedure will simplify the task of the court in deciding the proper amount of the confiscation order in those cases where the assets available are less than the estimated proceeds. I imagine that that will be a relatively commonplace experience where someone has used the proceeds to live high on the hog, as is not an uncommon experience.

Subsection (5) allows any acceptance or basis of challenge to be given either orally or in writing. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery sought a specific right of cross-examination by the defence. That is not included in the new clause. In the procedure we propose such cross-examination would, we believe, be part and parcel of normal court proceedings. However, it is envisaged that cross-examination will be allowed of witnesses who have first hand evidence, because that is always the best evidence.

I direct the attention of the House in particular to subsection (6), which might need to be discussed. Subsection (6) provides that acceptance by the defendant that particular property was derived from drug trafficking is not to be admissible in evidence against him in other criminal proceedings. This provision has been included to encourage candour by the defendant so that his proceeds can be accurately and speedily assessed. I emphasise that the concession is limited to making his acceptance inadmissible as evidence. There is no question of providing immunity from prosecution if other independent evidence can be put forward. However, I tender this part of our proposals rather more tentatively than the rest. I have had first and second thoughts about it. There is a balance of advantage that I shall explain.

We want to provide a procedure that can be speedily and sensibly carried forward in the hurly-burly of a busy Crown court. It will be an advantage if every inducement can be given to the defendant after the question of his guilt or innocence has been settled to get the mechanics of the confiscation order out of the way. It is not a question of offering immunity from prosecution. If he says something about the property that is to his detriment in another context it will not be used against him, but if other evidence tends to show that the particular item of property was the proceeds of, say, a bank robbery, that evidence will be admissible against him.

If, however, the consequence was that in the unlikely case of an individual having persuaded the court that the items of property were not the proceeds of drug trafficking but were the proceeds of another crime and it was not possible subsequently to adduce other evidence which established that other offence so that he might be tried and convicted of it, it might seem to be inappropriate that he should have the opportunity to retain possession of property that had been acquired unlawfully, although not through drug trafficking. There is a balance to be struck. I would not hesitate, if it were the opinion of the House that subsection (6) was not appropriate, to give an undertaking to withdraw it in another place.

Subsections (1) to (5), I believe, very much follow the wishes expressed in Committee two weeks ago. I am more troubled about subsection (6). I believe that the balance of convenience for including it in the Bill is a narrow one.

The consequential amendments simply allow for the fact that the House has adopted new clause 3, if that be our decision, and amend the Bill accordingly.

4.30 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: I am grateful to the Minister for bringing to the House and moving what I think is a welcome new clause.

On Second Reading and in Committee I was concerned at what seemed to be an inadequate right for the person appearing before the court for sentence to challenge the statement made by the prosecution before the court as to the extent to which he had benefited from the proceeds of drug trafficking. My concern was particularly for third parties. I must confess that I still have some misgivings, although they may not be strictly relevant under this new clause, as to the protection given in the Bill to third parties.

I accept what the Minister has said about the right to cross-examine. Under the general procedure set out in the Bill, and in this new clause in particular, there will be a right to cross-examine. I particularly welcome the Minister's statement to the effect that the evidence which will be called on behalf of the prosecution will be the best evidence available. I use the term "best evidence" as a term of art, which I think hon. Members will understand. Thus when the evidence is given it is not hearsay evidence and so it is not necessary to challenge hearsay evidence which is often met with a hearsay stonewall answer.

I read subsection (6) with great interest. On balance, I think that it falls within the general pattern of the new clause and is a satisfactory addition to the original provisions in the Bill. I shall be interested to see how the new clause ultimately is operated and how it works in the courts.

Many of us who have practised in the criminal courts over the years believe that there are many other areas in which there is room for the defence to be required to make statements to the prosecution before the hearing so that issues can be narrowed down. We have seen a number of notable experiments in relation to pre-trial reviews in particular in which it has been sought to narrow down the issues to shorten the length of trials and to reduce that very unwelcome element of surprise, which often leads to injustice to both sides in criminal cases. I hope that we shall see these provisions work well enough for the House to want to consider at some future date applying some similar provisions to other areas of the criminal law.

I agree with the tentative and obviously reserved statement by the Minister to the effect that the provisions of subsection (6) are likely to encourage candour. I believe that they will indeed encourage candour and that defendants, who have, after all, been convicted and who are to be sentenced before the provisions of the Bill come into operation, will be seeking to settle any dispute by agreement without the need for a further lengthy hearing before the court. In my view, subsection (6) is likely to strike the right balance, and I hope that it will not be thought fit to withdraw it in another place.

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I welcome the new clause, which I think is an improvement on the previous provision. If it is sufficient to satisfy the concerns voiced by members of the Opposition and, therefore, gives more of an all-party push to the Bill—although we have already had that—the message must go out from the House that the Bill has strong all-party support. If the doubts expressed by Opposition Members have been allayed, the Bill is that much stronger.

The point which I wish to raise briefly relates to a dialogue my hon. Friend and I had in Committee when I raised the importance of international co-operation on this matter, something that I have always emphasised is of vital importance. While my hon. Friend accepted that that was a crucial point, he pointed out that, where a defendent had his tainted assets overseas and claimed that all his assets in this country were legitimately earned assets, the courts could still proceed against those legitimate assets to the total value of the tainted assets overseas. In the sort of dealing which might go on, albeit to speed up the process of law, which I welcome, the defendent could claim that all his assets in this country were legitimate and that all his assets in some country with which we do not have a bilateral agreement — Haiti, the Philippines or somewhere exotic — were the tainted ones. He could claim that none of his assets in this country were tainted but were earned through the sweat of his brow and years of labour. As a non-lawyer, I hope for some reassurance from the Minister.

The *Hansard* report of Committee proceedings continues to state that I am a lawyer. I disclaim any such pretension, and no such label should be attached to me. If a defendent tries to be too clever by half—and we are dealing with the most sophisticated element of the criminal fraternity—and claims that all his assets in this country are legitimate, and that it is only in Haiti or the Philippines that his assets are tainted, I hope that the Minister will give us the reassurance that we shall proceed very hard and immediately against the legitimate assets of such a person to the cumulative value of the tainted assets overseas.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) has a difficult choice to make. I understand that, before coming to the House, he was a member of the press. I do not know which would win in a popularity competition between a journalist and a lawyer—and I say that as a former journalist.

I am not sure that I can assist the Minister very much with regard to new clause 3. Having listened to his explanation, I want to thank him for the care and faithfulness with which he has responded to the points made in Committee. Like the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), I think that the balance is about right. Anything that can be done to encourage candour in the courts is especially welcome. Who knows, if it catches on there, it might even catch on here.

Mr. Mellor: That is a shrewd blow aimed at the end of an amiable intervention by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett).

In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), may I say that in our preparation of the Bill we have had well in mind the fact that a major trafficker will almost certainly have some assets out of the jurisdiction. In addition, a major trafficker may well be involved in legitimate business and have taken to drug trafficking, or he may have gone into a business for a sufficient length of time as a cover for drug trafficking operations, so that one could not say that all parts of the assets of that business were tainted. We therefore resisted the temptation that our American experience might have led us into of laying emphasis upon the confiscation of the pieces of equipment that have been used in, or derived from, drug trafficking in favour of making a computation of the value of those items and making it mandatory for a court to make a confiscation order in the total sum, leaving it to the High Court, if necessary, itself to enforce that order against such property as it can find.

That is an important point, because if the tainted assets and the assets within the jurisdiction are one and the same thing, their recovery is perfectly straight forward. However, as in the example postulated by my hon. Friend, if the tainted assets are mainly outside the jurisdiction, the assets that cannot be linked to drug trafficking are within the jurisdiction, the offender refuses to bring those assets back into the jurisdiction, and we do not have arrangements with those other countries to enforce the order in their courts—we appreciate that it will be a time-consuming business to get those arrangements—it will be possible to satisfy the confiscation order by the seizure and disposal of the untainted assets that lie within the jurisdiction. If those untainted assets realise a sum sufficient to discharge the confiscation order, well and good. If there is a shortfall and it is clear that the offender could, if he chose, bring back other assets into the jurisdiction, he would be liable to serve the additional sentence of imprisonment in lieu of satisfying the court order.

In the absence of a full-scale international agreement, which we have been seeking with great vigour, and which is being sought at present in Vienna at the meeting of the United Nations Commission, I cannot pretend that we can iron out all the problems that will result from people placing their assets overseas. But we shall be able to resolve many such cases, as I hope I have demonstrated today.

I heard the reassuring remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) and the hon. Member for Erdington on subsection (6). I had to judge whether I should introduce the provision without including it in the new clause, or whether I should say, half-heartedly, "It is there, but I will remove it if you do not like it." I am glad that my decision to keep it in is apparently correct, although we must see what the other place has to say about it.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Clause 2

ASSESSING THE PROCEEDS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

Amendment made: No. 26, in page 3, leave out lines 17 to 29.—*[Mr. Mellor.]*

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 3, line 38, leave out 'at the time of' and insert 'at any time since'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 3, 4 and 5.

Mr. Mellor: I remind the House that the Bill originally provided for the assumption that the trafficker's property was derived from drug trafficking applied to all the assets that he held at the time of his conviction and all those that had been in his hands at any time during the previous five years. In Committee, we had a discussion, led by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), assisted by my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill), as to whether the period of five years was correct. Of course, I acknowledge that the period chosen was a pretty arbitrary decision. Sometimes one can justify the particular period more than other times, but no one can ever say that he has the last word on the subject.

The Government have reconsidered the matter in the light of the discussion in Committee. The hon. Member for Erdington said that the period should be extended to 10 years, although he made it clear that he was not wedded to that figure. He simply believed that the longer period might be appropriate. We arrived at the period of five years by answering this question: if a trafficker is asked to prove that his assets were not acquired as a result of drug trafficking, how long can we reasonably expect him to go back and for how long would he have kept the necessary records? For how long would he keep in touch with people who might be able to confirm what he said? We hit on five years as being a fair period.

4.45 pm

However, it emerged during the discussion and from further research that a recent Finance Act provided that VAT records, for example, should be kept for six years. The Inland Revenue expects people to produce information about their income and expenditure in a variety of circumstances, and although it has different time limits for different purposes, six years is fairly common. That is also the period for which employers are expected to keep records of employees' remuneration, and the period during which individuals may claim tax relief.

In the hope that the amendment moves in the direction in which several hon. Members wish us to go, we invite the House to extend the period from five years to six years. I do not know whether anyone will press me to go further than that this afternoon. A longer period would increase the burden on the defence to an unacceptable extent, because many defendants who had had a legitimate income would not have the records many years later to prove that that was so, and we should not penalise them for that. If the prosecution can prove differently, it should not be inhibited by the six-year limit. Six years seems to be a reasonable period for the assumption to apply, although, where it can be shown that assets acquired earlier than that were the proceeds of drug trafficking, there will be no inhibition on the prosecution's seizing them.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes asked why the relevant period for the application of the assumption was calculated back from the time of conviction. He suggested that the reference point should be the time of charging. Many hon. Members, including the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery and the hon. Member for Erdington, shared his view. We wish to meet that point, but, in the interests of consistency with other parts of the Bill, especially clause 4, we suggest that the reference point should be the institution of proceedings. That will often pre-date charging, so I hope that the amendment will be accepted by the House.

In reviewing the period during which the assumptions should apply, we also thought it right to cover any gap that might arise between conviction and the imposition of the confiscation order should the court need to adjourn for any reason. That is why we tabled amendment No.2.

As we propose to extend the operative period for the assumptions in clause 2, we thought that, in the interests of consistency, we should do the same in respect of transfers of property for less than full value, which also have a five-year limitation. That provision is included in

[Mr. Mellor]

clause 4. Although it is not strictly necessary for the periods in clauses 2 and 4 to be the same, it is sensible that they should be. That is why I ask the House to accept the amendment to clause 4, which would provide a six-year period. I hope that my explanations have helped the House.

Mr. Corbett: Before the week is over, I shall have inflicted much damage upon the Minister's political career by thanking him for the way in which he has responded to points made in Committee. As he said, there is far more logic in a six-year limitation, especially in terms of VAT and some Inland Revenue practices. I also welcome the fact that the period will date from the time when the proceedings were instituted, which again is more logical.

Mr. Raffan: I accept what my hon. Friend the Minister said about a period of six years. Ideally I would prefer even longer but one must be realistic. One cannot go beyond six years or a great deal of court time will be consumed. My hon. Friend is right; we do not want to do that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is not here but he made a valuable point in Committee to which my hon. Friend the Minister has responded by making the period apply from the institution of proceedings rather than from the date of conviction. My hon. Friend was adamant that the latter should not be the case. He was concerned that the period should not finish before conviction, otherwise assets acquired after arrest, but before conviction, would fall out of the frame. That would be unfortunate as someone could be on remand for some time. Such a person could still be receiving tainted money after proceedings had been instituted. I accept my hon. Friend's point that it would be in the defendant's interests to prolong the process of law so that he could get out of liability for as many tainted assets as possible, but I am still worried about the time between the institution of proceedings and conviction. What happens to tainted assets that are transferred during that time? My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes put it rather well—it falls out of the frame.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) to amendment No. 3 which meets the relevant arrangements by providing:

"at any time since the beginning of the period of six years ending when the proceedings were instituted against him".

That relates to the timing of the assumption. We think that it would be extremely unlikely if there were any difficulty in the period leading up to trial. Such matters would be in recent memory and the prosecution authorities would have full tabs on what the person was up to because he would have been identified and charged. A great deal would be known about him. That is the time when one would expect the prosecution to know the answers and to not have to rely on the defendant, perhaps going back to before the date when the defendant came to notice. At that earlier stage, it is quite reasonable to say that the defendant knows far more about how he got his house than the prosecution. In serious cases, assets would have been frozen in any event. I appreciate my hon. Friend's sincerity. If, having considered the matter, I find that I have been over-confident, we shall not hesitate to examine it again in another place. I shall write to my hon. Friend if we have a chance to re-examine it.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 3, line 40, leave out from 'him' to end of line 41 and insert

'at any time since the beginning of the period of six years ending when the proceedings were instituted against him'.

No. 4, in page 4, line 5, leave out 'in' and insert 'since the beginning of'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 3

AMOUNT TO BE RECOVERED UNDER CONFISCATION ORDER

Amendments made: No. 27, in page 4, leave out lines 31 to 44.

No. 28, in page 5 line 1, leave out

'of the matters specified in subsection (2) above'

and insert

'matter relevant for determining the amount that might be realised at the time the confiscation order is made from property available in respect of the defendant'.

No. 29, in page 5, line 2, leave out 'a statement so tendered' and insert

'an acceptance under section [Statements relating to drug trafficking] of this Act'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 4

CONFISCATION ORDERS: DEFINITION OF TERMS

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 5, line 18, leave out 'five' and insert 'six'.

No. 30, in page 6, line 13, leave out 'section' and insert 'sections [Statements relating to drug trafficking] and'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 5

APPLICATIONS OF PROCEDURE FOR ENFORCING FINES

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 7, line 37, leave out 'Any' and insert—

'Where—

(a) a warrant of commitment is issued for a default in payment of an amount ordered to be paid under section 1 of this Act in respect of an offence or offences, and

(b) at the time the warrant is issued, the defendant is liable to serve a term of custody in respect of the offence or offences,

the'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 19 to 21.

Mr. Mellor: This group of amendments does not represent any change of policy, but it tightens up the draft and usefully links the new provision to the existing procedure of commitment of fine defaulters by warrant. These are improvements, albeit minor, which I trust will commend themselves to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 19, in page 7, line 39, leave out from 'default)' to end of line 43 and insert

'to be served in default of payment of the amount shall not begin to run until after the term mentioned in paragraph *(b)* above.'.

No. 20, in page 8, line 1, after '4', insert 'or 9'.

No. 21, in page 8, line 6, leave out from 'disregarded' to the end of line 10 and insert—

'*(i)* any sentence suspended under section 22(1) of the said Act of 1973 which has not taken effect at the time the warrant is issued,

(ii) in the case of a sentence of imprisonment passed with an order under section 47(1) of the

Criminal Law Act 1977, or any part of the sentence which the defendant has not at that time been required to serve in prison, and

(iii) any term of imprisonment or detention fixed under section 31(2) of the said Act of 1973 for which a warrant of commitment has not been issued at that time.'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 6

RESTRAINT ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 8, in page 8, line 30, leave out from beginning to end of line 34 and insert 'The High Court'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 7

CHARGING ORDERS IN RESPECT OF LAND, SECURITIES ETC.

Amendment made: No. 9, in page 9, line 27, leave out from beginning to 'may' in line 31 and insert 'The High Court'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 22, in page 10, line 23, leave out 'state' and insert 'country'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 23.

Mr. Mellor: The amendment is intended simply to make the terminology of clause 7 fully consistent with that in clause 17, so that there is no possibility of dispute about the relative meanings of "state" and "country". We discovered that state and country had been used when one of those nouns alone would have done. We have opted for country for reasons which elude me, but I am sure that they are extremely good.

Amendment No. 23 is intended to bring the provisions relating to charging orders into line with those relating to restraint orders by specifying that an order must be discharged when the proceedings against the drug traffickers are concluded. A charging order is made only to secure payment of sums due, or which might become due, under a confiscation order: it is patently right that if the proceedings are discontinued, or if a confiscation is not made or is satisfied by payments from other sources, the charging order has no further purpose and must be discharged. It is a tidying-up which I hope shows our punctilliousness on these matters.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 23, in page 10, line 36, after 'if', insert

'the proceedings for the offences are concluded or'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 10

APPLICATION OF PROCEEDS OF REALISATION

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 24, in page 13, line 13, leave out

'as mentioned in subsection (1) above'

and insert

'by any person towards the satisfaction of a confiscation order'.

I hope that this also is a relatively straightforward matter. The amendment provides that money paid by the trafficker, or a third party, in satisfaction of a confiscation order should be treated in the same way as money collected by a receiver appointed under clause 9. That is, it will be treated as money collected in payment of a fine and paid by the clerk of the relevant magistrates' court to the Secretary of State for onward transmission to the Consolidated Fund.

I know that this touches on matters which were the subject of some discussion. I regret having to stick my head into the lion's jaws, but I am told that it is inevitable. I do so, and step back hastily.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 16

ENFORCEMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 17, line 11, leave out 'for' and insert

'that for the purposes of'.

No. 11, in page 17, line 12, after 'sections', insert

'[Cases in which restraint orders and charging orders may be made]'.

No. 12, in page 17, line 12, leave out second 'to' and insert 'this Act shall'.

No. 13, in page 17, line 20, leave out 'and'.

No. 14, in page 17, line 22, after 'institution', insert 'or conclusion'.

No. 15, in page 17, line 24, leave out

'as the case may be'.

No. 16, in page 17, line 24, after 'institution', insert 'or conclusion'.

No. 17, in page 17, line 25, at end insert

'as the case may be, and

(d) references to the laying of an information or the issue of a summons or warrant under section 1 of the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 included a reference to making a complaint or issuing a summons or warrant (as the case may be) under Article 20 of the Magistrates' Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

Clause 17

ENFORCEMENT OF OTHER EXTERNAL ORDERS

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move amendment No. 25, in page 18, line 31, at end insert

'as they have effect in relation to a confiscation order'.

This amendment is also proposed for clarification. It provides expressly that a number of provisions in the Bill — including those relating to restraint and charging orders and the realisation of property — should have effect in relation to those overseas confiscation orders which will be enforceable in England and Wales, just as they have effect in relation to confiscation orders made here.

This is another part of the international element to which my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) and others attach such importance. When we have an arrangement with a country that has negotiated, or, as we hope, we are both parties to, an international convention on these matters, an order which affects property in Britain made by a foreign court will in this respect be treated precisely the same as an order by a British court against the same property. That was already implicit in clause 17, but, knowing how lawyers will argue about these simple points, I thought that we should put the matter beyond doubt.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 18

ORDER TO MAKE EVIDENCE AVAILABLE

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move that amendment No. 6, in page 19, line 34, leave out from beginning to 'period' in line 35 and insert 'within such'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Govement amendment No. 7.

Mr. Mellor: This also is a technical matter but it is worthwhile. The Bill originally provided that where a circuit judge made an order requiring a bank or other holder of information to produce material to a constable, the bank should have to comply within seven days or "such longer period as the order may specify".

The amendments give the judge a new discretion to specify a shorter period if he thinks that is appropriate. Although it seems technical, there is a real point which I think will be welcomed particularly by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). The period originally was seven days. The hon. Gentleman, fresh from his discussions with the banks in the Select Committee on Home Affairs, suggested three working days. I must stress again that the banks have been most helpful in agreeing to the arrangements and have displayed a positive approach to the real difficulties in which financial institutions can be placed if unscrupulous people seek to make use of their services to launder dishonestly acquired assets. In Committee other hon. Members seemed sympathetic to the suggestion of the hon. Member for Erdington, so I undertook to consider it carefully.

5 pm

I have to report that the information holders that we consulted — the banks and the Inland Revenue — expressed serious reservations about three working days becoming the norm. They pointed out that the material in question might be at the other end of the country from the headquarters office on which the order was served and that they would have to identify and retrieve it, which might take time. Hon. Members can draw on their own experience of constituents' tax problems. Although the Inland Revenue always deals with our queries with cheerfulness, sometimes it takes longer than three days. The banks and the Inland Revenue have stressed that they would be happy to produce the information in less than three days wherever possible, but they did not want the embarrassment of regularly failing to produce the information on time.

In my opinion, the holders of the information are justified in preferring seven days as the normal period, but we are giving a discretion to the judge to impose an earlier deadline than seven days if he thinks that is justified and practicable, just as the Bill from the first gave the judge discretion to specify a longer time. I hope that deals in a Solomon-like way with the dilemma that we face.

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman has been his usual wise self. This is a sensible arrangement. I welcome the response by the banks and other holders of information that, where possible, they will not delay the provision of information.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 7, in page 19, line 36, at end insert—

'(2A) The period to be specified in an order under subsection (2) above shall be seven days unless it appears to the judge that a longer or shorter period would be appropriate in the particular circumstances of the application.'.—*[Mr. Archie Hamilton.]*

5.2 pm

Mr. Mellor: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I have the greatest pleasure in standing here, such a relatively short time after the Bill was introduced, to commend it to the House for Third Reading. The Bill has required a great deal of work by my officials and myself, but that work will have been worth while if it results in us having a mechanism whereby we can effectively deprive the drug trafficker of the enormous gains that he can achieve from a successful career pursuing that wretched crime.

Once again — this is not empty piety — I must say how grateful I am to hon. Members on both sides of the House for the positive spirit in which they have engaged in discussions on the Bill. There has not been in any sense passive acquiescence in the passage of a measure that hon. Members were too embarrassed to oppose because of the climate but a full-hearted recognition on both sides that the matter must be addressed speedily. My memory of our discussions will be the recognition that if the matter had to be addressed at all, it had to be addressed properly. There could not be legislation by gesture. We had to provide a mechanism which is capable of being readily enforced, and which bites.

When I introduced the measure in October, I said that the procedures we proposed would have the teeth of a shark. I believe that we have achieved that. Those who have participated in the discussions — I commend particularly the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile)—have considered the details and come forward with amendments which I have been able in Committee and this afternoon to accept or to embellish or work upon in a way that has strengthened the Bill. We should all feel a sense of shared achievement as we send the Bill to another place in the hope that it will be received there as positively as it has been here.

Before turning to matters of general interest, I wish to take the opportunity of dealing with one or two pieces of unfinished business which arose in Committee and which I could not address by way of amendment on Report. It would be inappropriate if the Bill were to leave the House without a full account having been given of our consideration of such matters.

Clause 2(6) provides that the court may adjust its assessment of the proceeds of drug trafficking to take account of changes in their value since they were received. In Committee it was suggested that such adjustments should be mandatory, at least where an increase in value was concerned. It was felt that reductions should continue to be discretionary. We have considered the point carefully, but remain convinced that mandatory adjustment would be impracticable, although attractive in theory.

In some cases it is true that the courts would readily be able to calculate increases in value, but in many cases they would not. Traffickers may well move their money around rapidly. Drug proceeds might be combined with other money to buy assets which were resold and the sale receipts might be used with other funds in different

combinations to buy other property. Such a cycle might be repeated more than once before a trafficker was brought to justice. It would often be impossible for the court in reality to assess the increase in the value of the proceeds. In those circumstances, we do not think it would be feasible to make the adjustment mandatory. Discretion will enable the court to take account of any significant gains, if necessary on a broad brush basis. I do not duck the issue, but we have to be realistic. Often a broad brush approach will be the only way of painting the picture. That is what the courts will want to do.

We are taking a fresh look at clause 2 to take account of the points made in Committee and to see whether, notwithstanding the reservations, we can clarify the provisions and make it easier for the courts to use the power of adjustment given to them by paragraph *(b)*. If necessary, an amendment will be tabled in another place.

Perhaps I may mention briefly two drafting points raised in Committee about which we have consulted the draftsmen. It was suggested that the word "present" should be inserted in clause 3(2)*(c)*——

Mr. Corbett: The hon. Gentleman is pulling in the crowds.

Mr. Mellor: Yes. I am glad hon. Members are now so interested in the Third Reading of a major Bill.

British Leyland

Mr, Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the Minister has just said, we are all interested in the Bill but we are also interested in other matters which are of great importance. During the last few weeks there have been several statements and questions about the future of British Leyland and the discussions with General Motors. I understand that at this very moment the Department of Trade and Industry is briefing journalists about further developments in the British Leyland saga. I and my hon. Friends resent very much the continued practice of the Department of Trade and Industry of using leaks and briefings instead of coming to the House and making a statement on a matter which is of extreme importance to many thousands of our constituents. I should like your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on how we can get a Minister from that Department to come to the House to make a statement at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Gentleman will realise that that is not a matter for the Chair. I am sure that the point which he has made will be duly noted in the quarters which can respond to what he has said.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There has obviously been a great deal of controversy since we returned after the Christmas recess about leaks and inquiries into the Westland affair. I am sure that none of us wishes to think that the Prime Minister was misleading the House less than two hours ago in some of her comments about British Leyland. In order to protect her reputation, she, or at least one of the Ministers responsible, should make a statement to the House almost immediately.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for hon. Members suddenly to come into the Chamber in the middle of a debate on an important Bill and make party political points at a time when they know they will attract the maximum media attention? Is that the way this House must conduct its business?

Mr. Terry Davis: I raised the matter because at this time officials from the Department of Trade and Industry are briefing journalists. Instead of that, Ministers should come to make a statement to the House.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The point at issue is simple. The House of Commons has a sovereign right to know what the Government have decided about a basic industry. The matter has not been debated over a great number of hours in the Chamber, but we know that at this moment journalists are being given information which has not been given to the House. That is not only wholly unacceptable, but irresponsible.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Further to those points of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and seek your guidance. We are debating the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill. It is designed to save lives and to hammer people who bring drugs into the country and make vast profits. It is a measure of the highest importance, and this vital debate is being interrupted by

[Mr. Harry Greenway]

Labour party members who came in to the House to make party political points of a dogmatic and cheap kind. I do not accept the sincerity of their points. They could have waited until the end of Third Reading to make those points. If they cared about stopping drug abuse, that is exactly what they would have done.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West) *rose——*

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker Order. Perhaps I can deal with the points that have been raised.

I have already made it clear that this is not a matter for the Chair. Hon. Members have made their points. We should now return to the business before the House, which is the Third Reading of the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to the point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all understand and sympathise with hon. Members who are taking part in the debate. Quite clearly, my hon. Friends would not have thought it right to intervene unless there was a matter of considerable importance taking place within the precincts of the Palace of Westminster but not in the Chamber. You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the issue of the disposal of British Leyland and its future is of the utmost current interest and importance, and it has been running now for more than the past week.

We well understand that it is not for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to answer or decree on these matters. It is customary, particularly in the presence of the Leader of the House, who I am glad to see is now in his place, to put through you to him the need for an immediate statement on the matters which the press is now being briefed upon about the future of British Leyland. Surely it is now up to the Leader of the House to make some response and to make sure the House has the statement that it deserves on this important matter.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I am sure the House wishes to give proper consideration to the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill. I also recognise the point the right hon. Gentleman has just made. Of course, I will look into the matter and perhaps it could be further considered through the usual channels.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In view of that exchange, I hope that we can now return to the business of the House.

Drug Trafficking Offences Bill

Mr. Mellor: As a Minister in that quiet Whitehall backwater, the Home Office, I am a stranger to controversy but it has enlivened my dull old life to be a witness to some controversy, even if I was not a participant. Perhaps I could return to an area in which there is rather more amity on display than in the one that has just been touched on. I hope that I was not dealing with matters at inordinate length, but I was trying to set the seal on the careful consideration the House has given to the Bill.

I was dealing with points that were raised in Committee by the hon. Member for Erdington and by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery who speaks for the Liberal party. I was explaining why it was that in some instances I was not able to come forward with amendments to meet their points as I did on some of the other matters. I was dealing with two drafting points that were raised in Committee on clause 3(2). I have been back to the draftsman to consult him about those.

In clause 3(2)*(c)* it was suggested that the word "present" should be inserted before "value" to make it clear that the property should not be valued as at the date of acquisition. I am advised by the draftsman that the earlier words in clause 3(2), by reference to the date the statement is made, were enough to put the matter beyond doubt. I hope that is helpful.

Some points arose about clauses 18 and 19. Those clauses provide for a circuit judge to make an order or to grant a warrant allowing access to information that is likely to be of substantial value to a drug trafficking investigation. The hon. Member for Erdington suggested in Committee that a more appropriate test would be "relevance" rather the "value". I know that he was concerned to ensure that the criteria for such orders are sufficiently tightly drawn, and he raised a valuable point. I understand and share his anxiety that the criteria should be sufficiently tightly drawn.

The phrase "substantial value" was taken from the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and is intended to be a sufficiently rigorous test to rule out any possibility that the powers would be used in marginal cases. In practice, I doubt whether much is likely to hinge on the distinction between "relevance" and "value". It is difficult to see how something could be of substantial value without also being of substantial relevance. Something could perhaps be relevant without being of value. If anything, on examination value may be the harder test to satisfy.

I have consulted the draftsman and he has advised me that "relevance" could lead to unintended complications because of its technical meaning in relation to evidence. The hon. Gentleman will remember that that was the objection that sprang fully armed from my own brow as a former lawyer who some years ago hung up his wig and joined the human race. For those reasons, I am not proposing any amendment to the original version. *[Interruption.]* I knew that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) would enjoy that.

Clause 15 contains a matter that we have not resolved, and it is about the formulation of the new laundering offence. The House may recall that that offence lies at the heart of the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), who I am glad to see in his place, and my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell) both asked questions in Committee, having

been properly consulted by bank employees about their liability. Perhaps I ought to return to that point in order to satisfy hon. Members who have expressed anxiety.

It is important that we get right any criminal offence, and particularly one that carries a maximum of 14 years' imprisonment. We have always accepted that this offence would be one of the more difficult parts of the Bill. From the start, it raised a number of tricky problems about the balance to be struck between effectiveness, on the one hand, and the risk of penalising essentially innocent behaviour, on the other. One of the difficulties about the activity that may give rise to the offence is that participating in a financial transaction will often look the same whether it is innocent or guilty. The mental element is all important. Defining what the mental element in the offence, or the mens rea, as they say in the Temple, should be has been exercising our minds.

Obviously, we do not want a formulation that will pose insuperable problems for ordinary honest bank clerks going about their everyday duties, but we need a formulation that will be effective in enabling any person who assists the drug trafficker by laundering his proceeds to be brought to justice and convicted without placing an impossible burden on the prosecution. We want to send out a warning that those involved in handling other people's money have a duty to satisfy themselves that they are dealing with the sort of person with whom respectable institutions would deal.

We have been looking carefully at the points raised by my hon. Friends, including the use of an objective test for the mental element of the offence, which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Corby, and the use of the word "suspect", which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes. Given the complexities of the laundering concept, we wanted to take further advice from the parliamentary draftsman and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am not able to announce any conclusion, but, given the importance of this new offence, I hope that the House will agree that it is important to take sufficient time to satisfy ourselves about the best formulation. As soon as I can, I shall write to the hon. Members who have been worried about this aspect. I assure them that if, as a result of our deliberations, we conclude that some change is advisable, any necessary amendment will be tabled in good time in another place.

I am not satisfied that we need to make a change at this stage, but I accept the legitimacy of the concern that has been expressed. We are driving ourselves on to examine the mental element to satisfy ourselves that we have done a precise job in formulating the offence in a way that is fair to those involved in financial deals and to the prosecution, giving it a proper opportunity to make this laundering offence stick. Some unscrupulous people are playing a vital part in facilitating drug trafficking by helping the principal to get away with his funds and to put them into legitimate assets. Does the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery wish me to give way? I see that he does not.

In Committee, a number of Members referred to Scotland. Although the legal systems in Scotland and in England and Wales are complementary, their approaches differ greatly. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has announced that he intends at the earliest opportunity to introduce legislation to provide for the confiscation of the proceeds of drug trafficking in Scotland. It would not be practicable simply to extend the provisions of the legislation to Scotland in view of the distinctive features of and separate procedures in the Scottish legal system. Until the Scottish legislation comes into force, provision must be made in the Bill to ensure that confiscation orders imposed by courts in England and Wales can be enforced against assets held in Scotland. Clause 14, as drafted, provides an enabling power for this to be done by Order in Council.

Following discussions with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, we propose to table amendments in another place specifying in some detail the procedures by which the Bill will be enforced in Scotland. Those procedures will replace clause 14 altogether. I am sorry that the complexities of drafting have not allowed us to do that in time for this debate.

Essentially, we propose that any order made by the High Court in England and Wales in exercising its functions under the Bill will be automatically recognised and have effect in Scotland. The powers of any receiver appointed under the Bill will be automatically recognised in Scotland. In cases where it is necessary to proceed to measures of enforcement, these powers will be available once the judgment has been registered in the Court of Session.

Police and Customs officers in Scotland will be given similar powers to those available to English and Welsh police under the Bill to ensure effective cross-border enforcement. Further points which occur when considering the Bill in another place might require other amendments or refinements. The provisions we have agreed would enable confiscation of proceeds to play a vital role in the Government's overall strategy against drug trafficking by removing the major incentive to traffic in drugs and by attacking the funds that are necessary to finance drug trafficking operations.

I come to a point which was specifically raised by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in a private notice question. It concerns the sale in a number of shops in London and elsewhere of cocaine kits. Last Friday week, I undertook to consider as a matter of urgency the adequacy of the present law to prevent such sales and the possibility of introducing a clause to outlaw the sale of these kits—a practice that has caused much offence to so many people. Given the importance of this issue and its relevance to the Bill, I hope that I may take this opportunity to raise it today.

We have looked carefully at the question whether any offence is committed under existing law by the sale of these kits. Although ultimately this is a matter for the courts, I have been advised that the incitement provisions of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 would bite on the sale of cocaine kits only in limited circumstances. To constitute an offence of incitement, there must be an element of persuasion. I understand that the kits are normally displayed and sold without any suggestion being made as to their likely use. Moreover, it is arguable that a person who buys a cocaine kit must either possess the drug or be determined to possess it. Hence, the question of incitement might not arise.

It has been suggested that the existing regulatory powers should be used to ban the sale of cocaine kits. I have consulted the Department of Trade and Industry, but am advised that the consumer legislation for which it is responsible is concerned with the intrinsic safety of consumer goods and no existing regulations could be held to apply to cocaine kits.

[Mr. Mellor]

For those reasons, we are inclined to think that the only effective answer will be the creation of a new specific offence. This in itself is not without difficulties because, as I explained last Friday week, the components of a cocaine kit are everyday items which are sold separately for legitimate purposes. Obviously, we would not want to penalise the sale of, for example, handbag mirrors or razor blades which have perfectly normal, straightforward uses. We want to ensure that any formulation of the new offence does not make it more difficult—this is an increasingly important point—for heroin addicts to obtain syringes and needles because of the increased risk of contracting AIDS and hepatitis which would be increased by the re-use of such items. We do not want to encourage addicts to go to "shooting galleries," as they are called in New York, where needles are used by a number of addicts, thereby facilitating the spread of these deadly infections.

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes) *rose*

Mr. Mellor: I shall just finish what I was going to say and then give way.

Obviously, we shall want to reflect and consult further with interested parties before reaching a final view on the best formulation of any new provision. Our initial thinking is that it should be made an offence for a person to supply or to offer to supply any combination of articles which, taken together, he knows or believes are likely to be used for the purpose of inhaling a controlled drug. It might be appropriate to provide in addition that a belief by the seller that the articles would be used to inhale a drug for medical purposes should be a defence to such a charge. We shall consider that point further.

We shall pursue this point as a matter of urgency. It is possible that such a provision will be regarded as relevant to the Bill. I shall raise this point with the authorities in another place. If it does not prove to be practicable to include such a provision in the legislation, we shall consider possible alternative vehicles. I know that the House as a whole shares the Government's concern that early action should be taken on the sale of these kits.

Mr. Hanley: I wanted to intervene before my hon. Friend gave that hopeful sign that there will be an end to the sale of drug paraphernalia. Will my hon. Friend and his Department be at pains to investigate how other countries, such as America, manage to rid themselves of certain drug paraphernalia? I believe that there is successful legislation in many American states banning this type of component kit.

Mr. Mellor: What my hon. Friend says about America is true up to a point. There is no federal offence of selling drug paraphernalia because of the same difficulties that we have experienced on this side of the Atlantic. However, there is a model law for application by states, which has been drafted by our good friends in the drug enforcement administration in Washington. Some states have chosen to adopt that approach. We have drawn upon the American experience in our consideration of the provision. I hope that when it is polished up, it will have support from both sides of the House.

Before we part company with the Bill, there are some basic principles that I should like to emphasise. It is offensive to ordinary citizens to see traffickers living in style as a result of the misery that they have brought to others. The likelihood of losing their proceeds will be an important deterrent if we can make clear how effective and sharp-edged the Bill is.

We must ensure that an effective remedy is available to the courts, so that proceeds cannot be used to finance further trafficking. Like a business, the danger is that proceeds from one deal could finance larger deals and allow ever greater quantities of drugs to be brought into Britain and to become freely available on our streets, thus threatening the future of our youngsters.

The money must be removed completely from the drugs arena. Obviously, that is easier said than done, but our efforts during the past six weeks are an advance on the efforts made in the different and simpler era of the early 1970s when the House passed the Misuse of Drugs Act. At that time the House purported to give power to seize assets, which the courts have subsequently found to be too narrow and devoid of the mechanisms that we have introduced today.

We have drawn on the international experience, which has informed the awareness of so many hon. Members who have contributed to the debate. We have especially considered the United States, which has a well-established criminal and civil forfeiture procedure. The United States example has spurred us on, because massive sums of money have been recovered from traffickers. Some significant breakthroughs have been made in the area of what happens to the money. Up to the present we have focused exclusively on what happens to the drugs. However, although the American example provided many insights and gave us a great spur to action, many of the United States provisions are alien to our legal system. The civil forfeiture procedure, though effective in America, is difficult for us to swallow. We have always expected such procedures to be linked to conviction. As links across the Atlantic have proved to be so controversial these days, I hope that we have not taken hook, line and sinker the American model, but that we have used the American experience to spur us on to a truly British answer to our problems. I give way to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The hon. Gentleman keeps wanting to give way to me. What have I done?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery was leaning forward menacingly. I thought that I had lulled him to sleep or stimulated him to some great thought. He may feel that he is entitled to rest on his laurels having contributed so much to the Bill.

We require a court to impose a confiscation order, because we wish to deprive every trafficker of his proceeds, however large or small. Bearing in mind our experience of forfeiture and confiscation orders in the courts, it is crucial that the confiscation order should not be an optional extra, but should be at the heart of the way in which a court deals with a drug trafficker. That is central to society's response to the problems posed by the drug trafficker.

At an early stage we had to decide whether to go down the forfeiture or the confiscation road. Forfeiture had its attractions in that tainted property could be seized without the need for valuation, which is part of our present legislation. However, for reasons on which I have already

dilated to my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan), forfeiture did not give us the flexibility of confiscation. The attraction of confiscation is that, once a sum has been compiled that represents the proceeds of drug trafficking, it can be enforced against any property of the trafficker regardless of the source from which the property might have come. That provides the crucial flexibility that is required in cases such as those raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn. When some assets are overseas and some are domestic, we can lay our hands only on the domestic assets with forfeiture, we would be unable to touch non-tainted assets, but with confiscation we can.

We have looked for the loopholes and tried to stop them in advance. The obvious loopholes are putting property in the names of friends and family and disposing of them before the end of the trial. We have not hesitated to lean across the civil law to take provisions that have worked well in that context, on the basis, "Why should the devil have all the good tunes?" If there are other loopholes, it is not too late for us to drive ourselves on to address the crucial points of detail. In the end, it is the small print rather than the large paragraphs that determines our success.

I stress the importance of investigative powers, not simply because they will help us to ensure that we get all the proceeds, but because they will enable us to go further into the complex conspiracies that are involved in major drug trafficking. They will help us to gain information about people who never soil their hands with the drugs, but who rely on others to do so. Those people mastermind the drug-selling operation from a distance, but they are only too anxious to mastermind the spending and investment at close quarters, because they are in business to make money. Those financial dealings will provide the crucial evidence to enable us to smash more conspiracies and to catch even more of the prime movers than we have succeeded in doing up to the present.

Going into the records of the Inland Revenue, banks and financial institutions is sensitive territory, however imperative the need to take action that drives us on. We must recognise that safeguards are applied to ensure that the authorities do not use drug trafficking as a pretext to throw on one side the liberty of the subject or to apply draconian powers to people who are innocent.

We must remember that some people who are not guilty of these offences will always excite suspicion. That is why we have been at pains to build into the provisions safeguards to ensure that, while they are hard-hitting, they will not put at risk the rights and welfare of ordinary citizens. That is why we have stressed the role of senior judges of the High Court at the restraint and enforcement stage. That is why we have considered even the singular matter of the investigative part of the Government machine going to court to ask another part of the Government machine to provide information that may be relevant to an inquiry. That is not to be done through cosy telephone calls, but through a judge deciding that it would be appropriate for the Inland Revenue to give records of suspects. That gives independence to the decision for access.

Restraint will be available only in closely defined circumstances. We scoured that provision this afternoon and made some changes. We have taken particular pains to ensure that the rights of third parties are protected by specific provision for them to put their case to the High Court before enforcement. We cannot leave third parties out of the matter. That would be to fail in our duty because we know that someone will always pass to third parties tainted money which must be recovered. Third parties have rights, which the Bill protects.

We insist that there must be reasonable grounds for orders and warrants requiring the disclosure of information by banks and others, and that the bank or financial institution may be heard about whether or not it is appropriate that disclosure should be made. We recognised that that might lead to the leakage of information which could, if it were relayed back to the central figure, be damaging to the investigation, and we have not hesitated to create a criminal offence of leaking information. I hope that that will deter people from doing so.

We are not an island in these matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Delyn, who has taken a great interest and to whom we owe a debt of gratitude for having taken through the House the increase in penalties for class A drugs, has been at pains to stress the significance of the international aspects. I have had the opportunity to travel and visit some of the other key countries involved. I know that if the international community is to resist the drugs menace, it must break down the barriers to effective co-operation and action against drug traffickers. The trafficker is a man of the world who exploits national boundaries to give him the freedom to operate and the confidence to feel that, while he and his henchmen are united in their endeavours, the authorities are fragmented and do not work together. The international elements of intelligence and law enforcement have been improved dramatically. I speak in the presence of members of the Home Affairs Select Committee who have travelled the world and seen that for themselves.

We have asked the House for powers, and it has been minded to grant us power to seek like-minded countries to enter into arrangements whereby any order made by their courts against a drug trafficker whose assets are located in the United Kingdom will be enforced as if that order were made in our Central Criminal Court. We expect them to do the same. That is the least we can expect as an international community if we mean what we say and are not merely gesturing about dealing with drug trafficking.

I do not want to underestimate the problems and difficulties. It is time-consuming to negotiate these arrangements painfully and country by country, as those with any experience of negotiating extradition arrangements will know. We shall try to do so, assisted by the clear impetus for change evidenced in our European partners who work with us in the Pompidou group—the Council of Ministers concerned with drugs—which we chair and in which we have played an active role.

The will exists, but it would be much better to draft a treaty with all countries with goodwill to deal with the whole of drug trafficking, to allow for mutual enforcement and for drug traffickers arrested in one jurisdiction to be shifted to another, and to make drug trafficking an international offence so that, wherever a trafficker commits an offence and wherever he is caught, the evidence is admissible against him. The fact that a man makes a drugs deal on the north-west frontier of Pakistan, intending to sell the drugs at a huge profit in Birmingham, Manchester or Liverpool, should not make it less of an offence against the people of those cities than if he had robbed a high street bank in one of those cities.

[Mr. Mellor]

Before much longer I hope to give an account of the efforts being made today in Vienna at the meeting of the United Nations Commission, at which 35 countries are represented, and of their positive responses to a new United Nations convention on drugs trafficking. They are thrashing out the various arrangements that need to be made.

We are not defenceless against the failure to negotiate international arrangements. We must not be starry-eyed. Just as some countries stand outside the battle against international terrorism, others will be ready to seize the chance of becoming a banking haven for tainted money, and we must recognise that. That is why we have given ourselves great flexibility through the structure of the order, and why we shall give a trafficker with assets overseas the choice of either bringing them within our jurisdiction or of serving a longer period imprisonment.

We were driven on this difficult journey by the feeling that, although we had increased the penalty to life imprisonment for drug trafficking, when a trafficker came out of prison he could live a life of ease and luxury on the proceeds. That was not enough to deter a ruthless or reckless person from becoming involved in the business. That spurred us on, and that is why we have worked so effectively together on the legislation. I urge the House to give the Bill a Third Reading.

5.48 pm

Mr. Corbett: On behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), I welcome the Minister's remarks about cocaine kits. Welcome as they were, we continue to look to the Government to take urgent effective action against this new menace. Parents and most young people are horrified at developments involving glue sniffing and other solvent abuse.

The Bill is an important new weapon in our national fight against drug abuse, which puts a generation of young people at deadly risk. However, it is only one weapon. By raising sharply the penalty for people who get caught taking part in the deadly trade, it may deter some people. The Bill might encourage others to get out of the drugs trade. When traffickers are caught and convicted, they will know for certain that all their assets will be taken unless they can prove that the assets were not bought or acquired with the proceeds of drugs trafficking.

We all know that to win this war against drug abuse, which we are all determined to do, we need a multi-agency approach. Clobbering the convicted trafficker hits and hurts but only after the damage has been done. More action needs to be taken on the supply and demand sides.

The Bill, as the Minister said, needs backing by the international community. Drug traffickers must be treated in the same way as acts of piracy or terrorism are treated by the responsible international community. The illicit drugs trade knows no international boundaries. Measures to chase and catch the traffickers and seize their assets need also to know no international boundaries. It is also important that every sensible step is taken to detect and prevent supplies of heroin and cocaine from coming into Britain in the present large quantities.

The Government know that the Opposition have been critical about the cut of 11·5 per cent. in the strength of Customs and Excise officers since 1979, although we well understand that there is more to combating trafficking than the proper manning of red and green channels at ports of entry. Nonetheless, effective manning at the ports of entry is essential.

The number of Customs officers has fallen since 1978-79, although we are now pleased to see that it is planned to raise numbers to 26,000 by 1 April 1988. Just so that we all know where we all are on this matter, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department—the hon. Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor)—will recall that when he gave evidence to the Select Committee on Home Affairs on 22 January 1986 it was put to him in question 520 in the minutes of evidence that the numbers of preventive uniformed staff at ports of entry would be back to where it was in 1979 by the end of the 1986-87 financial year. The Minister replied:

> "At the end of the financial year 1986-87 in terms of absolute numbers. It is a question of how they are used, of course, but that is right, yes."

The House will welcome the hon. Gentleman's further statement that—

> "what we have to say is that given the scale of the threat we now face, and the way it is manifesting itself, do we need additional cover here? If the answer to that is 'Yes', I certainly can assure this Committee that there is no arbitrary economic reason as to why those resources should not be provided."

We welcome that and I know that Customs and Excise staff and their trade unions will echo that welcome. The Customs and Excise staff are professional men and women anxious to do a professional job and ask only that they get the manpower, tools and training to do that.

Mr. Mellor: I welcome the way in which the hon. Gentleman is putting that case. As one who has tried very hard to establish a climate of shared endeavour, it has pained me that there has been a great difference between us and the Customs officers' unions on these matters. Since my ministrial group was formed, substantial additional resources have been announced for Customs and Excise. I appreciate that it will always be a bone of contention as to whether reductions that were made in the pursuance of the Government's overall objectives were proper. That is probably a matter that is best left alone as different people will draw different conclusions.

It is crucial that the resources are being made available. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear in the strongest possible terms that we support the Customs and Excise in its battle and reasonable requests will be considered in that spirit. I hope that we may go ahead on that basis. I am anxious to make it clear that we should lay to one side the sometimes rather harsh exchanges that we have had on these issues. I hope that we can pay full-hearted compliments to the way in which the Customs, in co-operation with the police, are trying to intercept as many narcotics smugglers as possible.

Mr. Corbett: I am grateful for the Minister's remarks but, more important, I anticipate that those trade unions with members in Customs and Excise will take his remarks as an encouraging sign and try to build on them.

The new investigative powers to track down the proceeds of trafficking in the Bill will demand a high degree of competence and skill from the police officers involved. Training is very much the key to the successful way in which the Bill's provisions can be effective. I hope that the Minister can give an unqualified assurance tonight

that any necessary training in relation to the Bill will get urgent priority and will not have to wait at the back of a queue because of a lack of staff or cash.

Parliament is providing an important new weapon in the battle against trafficking and will have no patience if the use of these powers is in any way delayed or blunted because of inadequate training. The developing specialist drugs squads, aided by fraud squad members, will have to make the detailed and complicated financial searches. Traffickers will not usually leave a fully sign-posted route to where their converted assets are stored.

My one disappointment with the Bill, and this will come as no surprise to the Minister, is that the novel step of turning the seized assets back against the traffickers has not been taken. I know the argument that the estimated £6·6 million a year will help to offset Government spending on drug abuse. I believe, however, that there has been a lack of imagination. The public would have understood and applauded the use of the assets to set up a trust to help to understand and combat addiction, to help to rehabilitate, treat and encourage people to come off and stay off drugs and aid the victims of abuse and their families. That was meant to be more than a mere public relations exercise. It was an idea to use the extra funds from such a sour source for such sweet and serious purposes, to supplement, not to substitute, what the Government are doing with taxpayers' money. Alas, that is not to be but I hope that when we consider confiscation of the proceeds of other profitable types of crime, we might debate the idea again.

At the start of my speech I said that the fight against drug abuse and trafficking is a national fight. That is why the Opposition have been as insistent as the Government over the Bill and why we shall continue to call for and support every sensible measure to combat drug addiction and its sad and savage consequences.

To underline our concern and approach, I now want to make the Government an offer. The Labour Opposition are ready to consider appropriate ways in which we might join in the work of the interdepartmental group on drug misuse, chaired by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, or in any other appropriate work. Fighting and winning the war against drug abuse is a job for all of us here and in all parts of the country at every level. It involves young people, parents, employers, voluntary groups, trade unions and everyone who cares about the nation's tomorrow. We are ready to play our part and discuss with the Secretary of State for the Home Department the offer that I have just made. We wish the Bill a speedy passage to the statute book and success when it comes into operation.

5.58 pm

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I was going to begin my speech by saying what a pleasant surprise it was to come into the Chamber in mid-week and find so much accord and so little argument. However, barely had the Third Reading commenced than the House was invaded by a rabble of synthetically angry Labour supporters who sought to raise, rudely and discourteously to those hon. Members who were concerned with this important Bill, a matter which was puny by comparison. The only object of the exercise could have been to try to get the maximum publicity for a mischief-making sordid manoeuvre.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who has tried so hard to present a united, sensible and constructive front, should have been embarrassed by the activity of his colleagues. If the Labour party felt so strongly about the Bill, that might have been more evident if we had seen more of its members in the empty ranks behind the hon. Gentleman whom I have so greatly praised.

I wish to congratulate the Government, in general, and my hon. Friend the Minister, in particular, on a Bill which will strike a substantial blow against the contemptible drug trafficker and the truly horrifying drug trade, and on moving so quickly to put the Bill on the statute book. I was not privileged to take part in the discussions which resulted in changes and improvements to the Bill during its passage since Second Reading. Improvements have been made to the mechanism through which the Bill's framework will operate.

At the beginning of the discussions on the Bill, anxieties were expressed about safeguards. I hope that those have been ironed out. If they have not, they can, of course, be further considered in another place. There was anxiety about the laundering provisions. The issue is difficult, but it has been dealt with by the Government with great good sense.

Anxiety has arisen about cocaine kits which are on sale in Soho. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for offering to consider the matter further. The public would not expect the Government to say—I do not suppose, in the light of what my hon. Friend said, that they will—that there is nothing that can be done. Of course something can be done if we have the will. I am encouraged to know that my hon. Friend is determined to ensure that something is done. I am optimistic that that problem will be solved before the Bill reaches the statute book.

Alarm greeted the announcement of this measure at the Conservative party conference. It was thought by some that it was contrary to all the principles of justice that the burden of proof might be placed upon the defendant. That fear has been shown to be baseless. There never has been a need for the strict canons of evidence to be applied in the sentencing process. When a man has been convicted of a crime, the burden of proof that the proceeds of crime were present and identifiable will still have to be discharged in court in the normal way.

It is astonishing, when one thinks about it, that the removal of the benefits of crime seems to have become such a novel concept. We talk about not allowing anyone to benefit from his crime, but confiscation has hardly been the basis of punishment for serious crime in this country since the forfeiture of property on conviction for felony was abolished. That was brutal and involved the complete extinction of all the rights and interests of persons who were convicted of felony. In the days long before the welfare state, the entire family suffered complete deprivation. It was necessary that the rules of a harsh and unfair age should have been corrected. But we seem to have swung too far in the opposite direction. It is only with legislation such as this that we return to the principle that everyone will uphold—that a man should not benefit from the proceeds of his crime.

The first response of the law-abiding citizen when someone commits a crime is, "Let him not benefit from it." Only afterwards do we consider to what extent the offender should be further punished.

We have still not confidently grasped that principle. We have not, for example, seriously considered using the precedent of this Bill to deal with the most serious of fraud

[Mr. Ivan Lawrence]

cases. I advocated as much the other day when we were debating the Roskill proposals. I hope that if the principles contained in this Bill are seen to be successful and helpful in deterring crime, we shall be able to extend them so that the substantial benefits which result from some of the frauds that are committed today can likewise be taken from the offender.

To remove the enjoyment of the proceeds of crime when a person is sentenced must be a further deterrent. Previously drug offenders could say, "I may have to go to prison, but my wife and children will benefit." Prison might not be so great a deterrent. Prison was sometimes not considered important by offenders who had not previously done much to benefit their wives and children. Or the offender may have said, "I shall have a lot of money to enjoy when I come out."

Those of us who have been engaged in the criminal process in the courts for a number of years know that men convicted of armed robbery and sentenced to four, five or six years' imprisonment have happily served the sentence confident in the knowledge that when they came out they would be able to enjoy £250,000 of ill-gotten gains accumulated from the offence. If the Bill is as efficient as we hope it will be, that will not be allowed to happen. There will be less temptation for offenders to commit crime. Crime might reduce rather than increase.

The law-abiding citizen will think it right that an effort is being made to stop the criminal enjoying the benefits of the most horrifying of all crimes—drug trafficking. It is a crime of multiple murder, because many people die when they are led into drug addiction and drug dependence. The horror of drugs in our society is not a figment of our imagination; it is happening. There has been a great deal of criticism of television recently in this place, but one of television's great achievements has been the portrayal of how horrifying are the effects of drug addiction on young people.

We have the record of what has happened in the United States to show how much worse the problem could become. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner), who has led the Home Affairs Select Committee, has recently returned from observing the scene in the United States. He warned us that in the United States the industry is second only to the motor industry in its size and turnover, which runs at perhaps $100 billion a year. It is almost too frightening to contemplate something like that here in the coming months and years.

The United States has taken measures upon which this Bill is based. The money confiscated is spent on anti-drug measures and the building of prisons in the United States. I hope that the money which is seized from those terrible criminals will be put to constructive use in the prevention of crime and the deterrence of further crime in this country. Again, to deprive drug gangs of the finance on which they would found future drug activity is so sensible and desirable that one can only be surprised that we did not think it right to take such action long ago.

I hope that the Government will not rest on their laurels when they have put the Bill on the statute book. This important measure is long overdue. It will not solve all our drug problems. More effort must be devoted to stopping the production of drugs. That requires determined international effort. I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Government on initiating activities internationally which will help to reduce that evil.

More effort must be devoted to the education of young people in our society to warn them of the appalling dangers of drug addiction. I compliment my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government on the steps they have taken in this regard. The broadcasting authorities should be praised for bringing the dangers of drug addiction so closely into our homes so that we and our children understand the miserable and appalling consequences of addiction.

More effort must be directed towards stopping the importation of drugs through an adequate Customs and Excise body and with properly trained officers. The Government must be congratulated on changing their policy on the reduction of Custom and Excise officers which will strengthen the barriers against this evil. We must devote more effort to catching offenders through more and properly trained police officers. The guilty must be convicted and in that regard we can take pride in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and other legislation which make the conviction of the guilty more likely while at the same time protecting society against the risks of conviction of the innocent.

There must be more effort to treat the afflicted victims. I have a great deal of sympathy with the final words of the hon. Member for Erdington. All of us must be concerned with the victim. This type of legislation stops future victims or reduces the number of future victims and this is the most positive action we can take. We must, however, concern ourselves with the treatment of those who have unfortunately already fallen foul of addiction.

At the end of the day the whole community must turn itself, not into a neighbourhood watch force, but a community watch force to identify the victims and the traffickers and to be prepared to report them to the police and to support the police in their activities to stamp out this evil. It is only by action on all these fronts that we shall have a chance of controlling the horrifying scourge of drug addiction and diminishing and hopefully destroying the potentiality of its grip upon our society.

6.12 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: I shall not detain the House long because several hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

I congratulate the Minister on the fair passage through which he has captained the Bill. The fair passage of the Bill has been especially remarkable because it is not one of those anodyne Bills which raise no issues of principle. This is not a Bill which avoids tackling head on some troubling civil liberty implications. There are those of us on both sides of the House who have had to examine our consciences and to judge carefully whether we were prepared to countenance breaches of what we would, sometimes regard as almost sanctified civil liberty principles in order to meet the needs of the public interest.

I agree with the Minister on the need for international co-operation. Unless true international co-operation can be achieved, many of the aims of the Bill will fail. Such co-operation could prevent the cultivation of dangerous drugs, in many countries. The Minister is right in saying that there is absolutely no use in this Parliament introducing what some may regard as draconian measures

if elsewhere in the world there is no let-up in the effort to prevent the pushing of drugs grown in those areas to people in the towns and cities of Britain.

We have sadly reached the stage when the drugs with which we are principally concerned, heroin and cocaine, are not only available in cities such as London, Manchester and Liverpool. I have been told by police officers that such drugs are available even in remote rural areas such as in my own constituency of Montgomery. They are available in the small towns and villages of rural Wales and rural England.

Against that background, I have decided that the Bill, despite some of its more worrying implications, must be supported. However, without seeking to sound a note of dissent, I am aware that there are many outside the House and many in the other place—not shackled by electoral constraint or by the sounds of clanking electoral chains—who still have some reservations about parts of the Bill.

The discussions on the Bill have not adequately tackled the implications for third parties. I hope that those matters will be considered in another place and that the Bill will emerge from there with an assurance for us that third parties will never run the risk of losing property which they have purchased or acquired in good faith. I believe that that can be achieved.

I have already exchanged letters with the Minister on the question of the use of powers similar to these in the much broader range of criminal offences. I look forward to the day when we can see the Hodgson report—not just a carefully chosen part of that report—expanded in applicability to a much wider area of criminal law.

I welcome what the Minister has said concerning the examination undertaken by the Government of the sale of cocaine kits. The sale of such kits is a wicked activity. I was privileged to be one of the sponsors of a Bill which dealt with the prohibition on the sale of glue sniffing kits. I believe that that was the first of what may end up as a series of statutory provisions which will ensure that profit is not made by the criminally greedy out of the misery of others. We must take steps to close the loopholes which enable, for example, unprincipled newsagents to hang, inside the door of their shops, the equipment which causes misery and death. I hope that the Government will ensure that adequate provisions are put on the statute book.

I fear that the Minister may have a false sense of security due to the assent from all parties to the Bill. I suspect that the aplomb and the dispassion with which he viewed the discourteous chaos which broke about around him during the debate will not have passed unnoticed. We may find that he is shortly translated, by promotion, to that graveyard of political ambitions, the Department of Trade and Industry. I hope not.

6.18 pm

Mr. Hanley: The members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs on their visit to the United States to investigate the terribly serious state of cocaine taking in that country discovered that there are three major areas involved in the drug trade. There is the supply, the demand and the profit. If one cuts off one of those three legs of the stool, there is a good chance of the other two dwindling by themselves.

The Bill deals with one of those areas. It does little to deal with the supply of drugs or the demand for drugs. Separate measures must be taken by the Government and successive Governments to deal with those areas. It deals for the first time with the profit elements in drug trafficking and the House should not only be grateful for but proud of that. Within a short time, the House has got to the bottom of this part of the triangle of drug trafficking and, in a scene of supreme co-operation, has managed to produce a Bill that is not only effective but has attracted agreement from both sides of the House. The House will be ennobled by the passage of this legislation.

On behalf of the House, I thank both my hon. Friend the Minister and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett). Twice in less than a day we have seen what co-operation between the two great parties can bring to matters of tremendous importance and concern. Both my hon. Friend and the hon. Member were in the Chamber just before 2 o'clock this morning co-operating on the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill. Again, just over 12 hours later, the two of them are constructively introducing a Bill that brings us far closer to an answer to this awful problem. My hon. Friend and the hon. Gentleman have shown such co-operation that any future coalition, if we were to have one, would have to look to them both. I just wonder who would be the Home Secretary.

The Bill creates three new powers. The first is the power to trace, freeze and confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking; the second is the new offence of assisting another to retain the proceeds of drug trafficking; and the third is the new offence of disclosing information that might prejudice a drug trafficking investigation. Only last Christmas, my hon. Friend the Minister said:

> "The prospects of vast profits is a powerful lure, and a major reason why criminals are drawn into the evil trade of illicit drugs. Even the risk of long prison sentences is acceptable to some if a life of affluence awaits them on release. We have to ensure that drug traffickers simply will not have a chance of enjoying the proceeds of their contemptible activities and, just as important, that they and their associates have nothing left to finance further crimes."

I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing to the House legislation that will leave the House achieving exactly what he intended such a short while ago.

Let us look at the background. The Government's proposals for tracing and confiscating all the proceeds of the drug trafficking were developed in consultation with those directly involved not only in the operation of the new powers, including the police, Customs and representatives of the banks, but with representatives of other nations that have experienced this evil. The recommendations in the Bill can clearly be placed on three sources. The first is the fifth report of the House of Commons Select Committee on Home Affairs, on which I am proud to serve, and which has been led so honourably and conscientiously by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fylde (Sir E. Gardner), and upon which the hon. Member for Erdington served. The second source is the publication "The Profits of Crime and their Recovery", the report of the Howard League working party chaired by Sir Derek Hodgson.

The third source is evidence from my hon. Friend the Minister. It is rare in Select Committee experience that wherever the Committee has travelled, whatever it has seen, whatever the evidence that it has studied, the Minister has been there before it. It is so often the experience of a Select Committee that it recommends that a Minister should go and see what it has seen. In this case, my hon. Friend had seen it before the Committee and it is gratifying that the Minister and the Committee came to

[Mr. Hanley]

the same conclusions in the same spirit of co-operation that we have seen today. It is also gratifying that the Select Committee, in its unanimous report, made several recommendations, some of which have been included in the Bill.

The need for the proposed new powers was illustrated by Operation Julie in 1978. Those convicted after that investigation had manufactured and sold LSD on a vast scale. Huge profits had been made and the prosecution was able to trace £750 million worth of profits to assets in the hands of the defendants. In addition to long-term imprisonment, the court made an order for the forfeiture of the profits, but on appeal to the other place it was held that Parliament had never meant for the forefeiture orders to be used as a means of stripping traffickers of the profits of their unlawful enterprise.

Members of the Select Committee and my hon. Friend the Minister, having seen the assets on display in Florida, know full well that we have to seize assets. The law as it stood after Operation Julie said that the power could be used only to forefeit property directly related to the offence, such as drugs themselves, but not to the equipment for making, the vehicles used for carrying, and the cash that was about to be used or had been handed for them. In Miami, the Select Committee saw the houses, aeroplanes and vast boats—almost ships—that had been financed out of the proceeds of drug trafficking. It is obscene to see the wealth that the profits from drugs have bought.

It is frightening to envisage the power that drugs could buy. The Committee members stood in a small room, 10 ft by 15 ft, among $10 billion worth of cocaine and marijuana. That showed what wealth can be accumulated in a small space. I have been a chartered accountant for some years and have been privy to many stock takings. I have never stood in such a small space and been confronted by such vast wealth in assets. One could hire an army ready to die for the gold of that money. I am told that in Africa mercenaries are bought for less than that, and if they knew where that room was, the money could be multiplied 10 times over.

As my hon. Friend the Minister said, the industry is worth $100 billion a year and is second only to the motor car industry. It is bigger than the gross domestic product of 15 out of 25 OECD nations. Therefore, it is an industry bigger than many independent democratic nations. One can imagine the damage it could do if put into the wrong hands. It is vital that we have the powers given by the Bill to ensure that people think again before taking to crime.

Confiscation orders are only part of the Bill's powers, but they are harsh. If a person has been convicted in the Crown court of drug trafficking offences, the court is required to make a confiscation order that deprives the offender of the value of the proceeds of his trafficking. That will be in addition to whatever sentence the court otherwise feels is appropriate to the offence. That is not just getting down to bedrock; it is moving further.

The confiscation order will not be limited to the proceeds of the offences for which the defendant is being sentenced, but takes into account all trafficking generally, and will do so by reversing the burden of proof. No hon. Member would take such a step lightly—one has to consider it carefully. The Select Committee considered it hard, and still recommended this step. To reverse the burden of proof may be seen to be completely against the civil liberties of most of our citizens. It runs against British justice, which we have come to know and respect.

In these cases, the court will be able to assume, unless the contrary is shown, that all the defendant's assets, together with any profits that have passed through his hands in the previous six years, represent the proceeds of drug trafficking. I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for the amendment which clarified that period, not only increasing it from five to six years but clarifying the period over which the assets might be calculated. In the original Bill, I believe that it was unclear and could have led to delays in court procedure, but the Bill is now absolutely clear.

Some people have expressed concern about the reversal of the burden of proof. I think it should be known outside the House that the prosecution must still prove that a person is guilty of the offence with which he has been charged. Having done so, it is easier for the defendant, rather than the prosecution, to explain how he acquired the money. It is therefore perfectly reasonable to ask the defence to establish what part of the offender's assets has been legally acquired. If he is unable or unwilling to answer, then, following a drug conviction, it is quite legitimate for the court to assume that it was obtained illegally.

On the matter of the realisation of assets, once the confiscation order has been made the High Court will have power to appoint a receiver to legalise any of the offender's assets to satisfy the order. Assets which have been in the hands of the offender but have since been transferred to a third party for less than full value may also be included as long as the transfer has taken place within the previous six years or the assets can be shown to represent the proceeds of drug trafficking.

In Washington, New York and Florida we saw that imprisonment often has no effect. We heard of agents in the drug enforcement administration being murdered, and in the past few days we have even heard of many employees of an airline being persuaded and bribed to carry drugs. We travelled by that airline. We know how the Customs officers are trained to spot the profile of those who are likely to be carrying drugs. We know that proper training for Customs officers is vital and keeping them up to date with modern techniques is expenive but important.

I do not believe that the Customs officer we met in Atlanta, Georgia, was aware that between 50 and 100 employees of the airline who passed information to him about those who were likely to be trafficking in drugs were trafficking in drugs themselves. I have no idea whether he had any contact with them, but I know what a difficult task it is to spot such individuals who will go to any lengths to make what can be millions of pounds through their evil trade.

However, imprisonment is important. I am glad that if the confiscation order is not satisfied in full the Bill will provide for increased maximum periods of imprisonment for default. The confiscation order may not be satisfied perhaps because some of the offender's property has been placed outside the jurisdication of the court, put away in some other country or given to another individual who cannot be traced. I am glad that the current maximum of 12 months' imprisonment will be increased dramatically. The Bill provides for a new progressive scale for the non-payment of the confiscation order with a maximum of 10 years for default of sums over £1 million. I hope that my

hon. Friend the Minister will consistently increase that period in the light of experience so that it will be effective as time passes. Those periods of imprisonment for default will be in excess of any other prison sentence imposed by the court.

The Minister mentioned investigative powers which are so important. The Bill provides new powers to investigate the financial dealings of drug traffickers. We need to investigate those financial dealings, but it is not easy. We know how difficult it is to investigate the financial affairs of those involved in fraud in the City but, with respect, these sums of money are even bigger. They can mean, as we saw in America, multi-billion pound organisations with money laundering so clever that it is almost impossible to trace the funds through to the businesses—some often legitimate—set up by the traffickers. It costs a great deal of money to investigate fraud; and to investigate fraud on the scale of multi-billion pound organisations would be even more difficult.

In the Bill, when there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a person is engaged in drug trafficking the police or Customs officers will be able to apply to a circuit judge for an order requiring the disclosure of information which could be of substantial value to the investigation. The powers will be available in respect of information held by banks and other financial institutions and also information held by the Inland Revenue and other Government Departments. We need that co-operation.

I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Minister has said that he will look again at the powers in respect of people such as bank clerks. In Committee I said that the legal committee of the Committee of London and Scottish Bankers shared a real concern

"that the effect of the present wording would be to imperil the ordinary lowly bank clerk who might be said to have had grounds for suspicion about a particular transaction. All of the clerk's training will have been based on the bank's duty of confidentiality to its customers, which is enshrined in law by the decision in the case of Tournier and the National Provincial and Union Bank of England." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee H*, 30 January 1986; c. 5.]

My hon. Friend is right to look at that matter again. In fact, the change of words which I suggested in Committee seems to have attracted careful research. I believe that eventually it will be shown that it needs some amendment, or an announcement in another place as to how the legislation will work.

I am a little worried that suspicion, for example, by a police officer, is not enough upon which to make an arrest or charge an offender in any other type of legislation. It is commonplace in our law that no jury feels it can convict on suspicion alone. To raise the suggestion that mere suspicion by a bank employee who is taking part in otherwise routine bank transactions could result in a person being found guilty of an offence carrying 14 years' imprisonment—which, as my hon. Friend the Minister said in Committee, is the second highest penalty—shows how serious the matter is. It is still an extremely high penalty for suspicion. I do not want my hon. Friend to believe that in mentioning that I am trying to weaken the Bill. I want to ensure that juries convict but that they convict more often than they release those who, were it not for that provision, might get off.

Another part of the Bill concerns the restraint order. Once proceedings have been instituted the prosecution will be able to apply to the High Court for an order freezing any assets which may subsequently be needed to satisfy a confiscation order imposed on a defendant. We need restraint orders because they are another weapon in the armoury. As I mentioned before, two new offences are created by the Bill which facilitate the retention, control or investment of the proceeds of trafficking by another person, knowing or having reason to suspect that the person is a trafficker. I believe that that penalty is valid. As I have mentioned, I do not wish anybody to think that I want to water it down.

The other offence is prejudicing a drug traffic investigation. That has been directed at those who, learning that police or Customs officers have obtained or applied to a circuit judge for an order requiring disclosure of information, tell the suspect that his affairs are being investigated. I am glad that that will be punishable by a sentence of at least five years.

The Government's record which culminates with the Bill and which will continue is vital. The United Kingdom is spearheading a campaign to cut production in the source countries. Already nearly £4 million has been given to Pakistan. I visited Pakistan with the Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. We looked into the drug problem there and the question of international co-operation. I am glad that opium crop production has been cut. I am also glad that £1 million is being used to combat the illicit production of cocaine in south America, that during the past five years the number of Customs and Excise officers has more than doubled and that 150 additional officers are to be appointed this year.

I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department has taken on board the words of the hon. Member for Erdington, that if it is to be an effective deterrent the force must have sufficient means with which to provide the deterrent. A national information and education campaign has been launched. Parole for drug traffickers has been severely restricted. Full Government support has been given to private Members' Bills such as that of my hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr. Raffan) who last year so brilliantly steered through Parliament his Bill. The strength of the regional crime squads has been increased by 20 per cent. and a national drugs intelligence unit has been established.

The Bill will be an effective weapon, but we must not forget those who are the victims of drug abuse. Education is vital if we are to cut down the demand for drugs, and international co-operation is absolutely vital if we are to cut down the supply of drugs. By legislation we can help to cut the triangle of drugs: the supply, the demand and the profit. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department and the hon. Member for Erdington and all right hon. and hon. Members who have joined together to help to protect the millions of people who might otherwise not only be injured by but die from the drugs menace.

6.41 pm

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): The Bill addresses the most serious problem that can affect young people. I was actutely aware that this problem would arise. During the early 1970s I lived in the United States where I became aware of the fact that a huge proportion of New York city's population was affected by drug addiction and that it caused social and criminal problems. They were so significant that they dominated New York city. Everybody was aware that muggings, street crime generally and gang

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

warfare in the city were largely caused by drugs. This continues to be a problem in many parts of the United States. I am afraid that it is now becoming a very large problem in the United Kingdom.

No one should underestimate, however, the difficulty faced by the Government in trying to do something about it. Drug addiction causes immense difficulties. It is a form of affliction that has many causes but whose cures are not obvious. The Government undertake various forms of activity. It is extraordinarily difficult, with 40 million people arriving in this country, to detect the importation of drugs, even when Customs and Excise and the police become very good at detection in a particular area—for example, at Heathrow. Drugs enter this country in various ways—for instance, in cargo containers—but when the gap is plugged in one area it opens up somewhere else.

Our police forces are not equipped to deal with the detection and distribution of drugs. The manpower that this would involve and the degree of co-operation from the public that would be required are not attainable. It is very difficult to find the places where dealings in drugs take place and to bring to book the people who are involved.

There is much controversy over the method of treating addicts and the cost of providing treatment on the National Health Service. However, if we can cure 30 per cent., 50 per cent. or 70 per cent. of those addicts who present themselves for treatment, we shall remove them from the streets where they do harm to themselves and to others by selling drugs and involving others in drug abuse.

We have been trying to establish a drug treatment centre in my Bolton constituency. The problems involved in trying to do so within our highly decentralised National Health Service are enormous. The agreement of the professionals has to be obtained. Furthermore, the public has to agree to expenditure of this kind, because that money would otherwise be spent on other forms of treatment. Fortunately, some progress has at last been made.

We are also trying to educate children not to become involved with drugs. This is another highly contentious area. Many people feel that it could be counter-productive even to mention the subject to children. I am glad that the Home Office's interdepartmental committee is attempting to co-ordinate the efforts to educate children, adults and professionals about how to stop the spread of drug abuse. But it is not easy. Anything that can be done to attack the problem at its core is vital. The Bill falls very much into that category.

Drug trafficking involves large sums of money, and very sophisticated criminals and criminal techniques have come to the fore. It is necessary therefore to remove the incentive for criminals to become involved in this trade. We shall then be able to interrupt the supply of drugs. This legislation, for which many right hon. and hon. Members have been asking for a long time and which was foreshadowed in the United States and elsewhere, will make a considerable contribution. If semi-organised criminals who have been involved in other forms of crime begin to dabble in the drugs trade but then find that they are subject to a new range of legal penalties because their assets are seized and because they are put under surveillance by financial institutions as suspected drugs traffickers, it will act as a considerable disincentive to them.

If it is not possible immediately to seize the assets of a suspect who is arrested because he is suspected of trafficking in drugs, is my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department satisfied that it will be impossible for that individual to exercise his right to contact his lawyer or somebody else, who may then be able very quickly to move his financial assets out of the country and thus defeat the objectives of the Bill? I ask him to look at the possibility of introducing an amendment to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 so that criminals in this category can be held incommunicado for long enough to obtain a restraint order, thereby ensuring that this cannot happen.

Drug addiction is a disease that affects society. However, unlike other diseases, many people are making money out of it. They are cynically exploiting young people for gain. The Bill will make only a small dent in the drugs problem, but is it not morally right that these horrific criminals who exploit young people for enormous financial gain should be brought to book and stripped of all their assets? In this way, even if they are imprisoned, they will be unable to enjoy the proceeds of their crime at a later date, which is what is happening now. What good is it locking up a person for a crime if a year later, or even four or five years later, because the sums are so large in some cases, he knows that, having served the prison sentence, he has a fortune awaiting him outside? What good is it if we cannot ensure that that person is stripped not only of his liberty but of the proceeds of his heinous crimes?

6.50 pm

Mr. Keith Raffan (Delyn): I wish briefly to give my particular and personal welcome to the smooth passage of the Bill through the House, following as it does my private Member's Bill, the Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Act. This, too, has been a non-partisan measure which has been given wholehearted support from every quarter of the House. For my Bill, I managed to get 11 sponsors representative not only of every party in the House but of every faction within each party—from saturated wet to bone dry on my own side and from militant moderate to immoderate militant in the Labour party. Indeed, I was glad to have the support of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) even though he thought that I would never get it through the House. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), who was so cagey about becoming a sponsor of my Bill eventually refusing to do so, has redeemed himself by the admirable way he has responded to the Bill on behalf of the Opposition during its various stages through the House.

There is no difference between murder by heroin for financial gain and murder by shotgun in the course of armed robbery. If those found guilty of burglary and fraud are not allowed to retain their ill-gotten assets, why should drug traffickers be allowed to do so?

The Bill, as my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary said, is potentially "a sharp new weapon" against major drug traffickers. How sharp it proves to be depends largely upon the implementation of the legislation.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary knows, I am most concerned about international co-operation, which is vital. How sharp this weapon is depends to a great extent on that. We are dealing with highly sophisticated criminals. They are used to

laundering the assets of their crimes through a multiplicity of bank accounts and properties in a multiplicity of countries. I know that there are ways in which we can proceed against them. As my hon. Friend said on Report, we can proceed against legitimate assets here in this country to the value of the tainted assets abroad. As my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) made clear, we can add an additional custodial sentence if a major drug trafficker found guilty does not know his financial obligation and pay the full value of his tainted assets to the court. An additional sentence can be added to any other sentence he receives.

But progress in international co-operation is vital. Bilateral agreements with other countries are time-consuming and difficult to conclude effectively. The alternative is by conventions initiated through the Council of Europe or the United Nations.

The 35 member states of the United Nations most intimately involved in the problem are putting forward a draft convention but that is only 35 out of 150 members of the United Nations. If we do not proceed from the stage of a draft convention following the meeting in Vienna we must consider the question of a Council of Europe convention, as my hon. Friend has suggested. Indeed, he is on record as saying that

"that is not a second rate option."

I hope that he will follow though on this should the meeting in Vienna prove to be not satisfactory.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations has proposed that in 1987 there should be a world conference at ministerial level to consider the whole question of drug trafficking. I hope that we will take the initiative at that world conference to ensure that the measures we have taken can be implemented effectively. Their effectiveness depends upon international co-operation. As my right hon. Friend said, it can be a sharp new weapon. Indeed, "Justinian" in the *Financial Times*, as quoted in Committee by myself and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) on Second Reading, described the Bill as

"one of the most fearsome pieces of legislation in modern times, both in the investigative powers it gives to public authorities and in its penal sanctions".

I do not think that I can pay any greater tribute to the Minister and his officials than that. We are dealing with one of the most evil criminal trades in the world. Our response to that trade should be an extremely fearsome piece of legislation. If in Standing Committee and on Report we have made it more fearsome, we have improved on the original.

The Bill now moves to another place. I hope that we shall see it enacted before the summer. Meanwhile I look forward to hearing from the Minister what he anticipates will then happen, what progress he believes we can make towards achieving vital international co-operation through bilateral agreements with other countries, through a United Nations convention or through a Council of Europe convention on drug trafficking.

6.56 pm

Mr. Mellor: I thank all those who have contributed to the debate on Third Reading for their kind remarks about the measure and my contribution to it. I assure those who spoke of the overall context into which the proposal has to be set that in no sense will the Bill's passage through the House and the other place represent any slackening in the Government efforts. Indeed, we shall be spurred on to greater achievements.

As I have said before, all of us who have studied the problem know that there is no escape from the drugs problem down the law and order route; success will come only because people reject drugs. As long as there is a market for drugs, there will always be ruthless people ready to meet that demand. What we have done today, I hope, will help to make the path of the drug trafficker a much less attractive one, and one fraught with many more perils than hitherto.

I thank particularly the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) for some of the points he made. Dealing first with what he said about Customs officers, I should like to draw a line under some of the controversy that has raged in that respect. We now see a clear way forward. When I went to Heathrow, I was impressed by their work. One had only to go into the frightful room where they have to wait for people to pass motions to see whether they have a swallower on their hands to realise that it is a difficult job we ask our Customs officers to do, and we are lucky to have men of such talent and capability to carry out the work.

I welcome too what the hon. Gentleman said about closer co-operation. If I may say so, I take that in the spirit in which it was offered, and I should like to follow it through. In dealing with an issue as important as this, we should focus on what we can do together and should not regard this as another opportunity for partisan dispute.

I thank those hon. Members who commented on the proposal I canvassed about dealing with the menace of cocaine kits. From what has been said, I gather that my proposals meet with approval. I shall therefore continue with the efforts we are making to put them into final form and to examine whether they can be included in the Bill in the other place or whether some other way may be found. Given the amount of co-operation that exists, I am sure that this can be taken forward.

The Bill now leaves the House and goes to the other place. I hope that it does so with the good wishes of all those present and that in the other place it will be dealt with in the same spirit that it has been dealt with here, as a necessary part of the battle against drugs on which we are all embarked.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Mr. Speaker: We now come to the private business set down for consideration this day.

British Leyland

7 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I rose on a point of order nearly two hours ago, because we had heard that a press conference was taking place in which the Department of Trade and Industry was briefing journalists on further developments in the British Leyland saga. It was and is our view that such information should be given first to the House, not to the press, and we therefore asked for a statement.

Since then, we have learnt that the Secretary of State himself briefed the lobby. We further heard, first, that three more bidders in addition to those named yesterday have come forward for the Land Rover division; secondly, that there is the likelihood of a reference of the General Motors bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and, thirdly, that a bid deadline has been set for mid-March, giving most companies only a few weeks to prepare while General Motors has had nine months of secret negotiations.

We contend that this is proper material for a statement to the House so that the Secretary of State can be properly questioned about the new developments. We feel this all the more strongly since our request to the Minister for a statement was turned down only this morning, and our request for a Standing Order No. 10 debate was refused only yesterday.

The Leader of the House concluded our earlier exchanges today by saying that the matter could be considered through the usual channels. May I, therefore, press him again to prevail upon his bashful colleague, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, to face the House tonight?

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Many hon. Members, not least myself, are determined to see a British solution to this problem. However, I urge the shadow Leader of the House not to play this game. It is a mischievous and dangerous game. If the message goes out that we are continually trying to drag this affair before the House at this stage, it would be even more dangerous. There are enough watchdogs in the House for Britain's interests without continually suggesting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this a point of order for me?

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: May I make this final point? The suggestion that every time a Minister holds a press conference or conducts a private briefing upon the problem he must make a statement in the House is mischievous and dangerous, and I urge the House to have nothing to do with the matter.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Since the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) was not in the Chamber when I made my earlier point of order—I do not criticise him for that—he is not aware that his criticism is completely misplaced. The point of order that I raised with Mr. Deputy Speaker related to a briefing taking place on developments in the British Leyland affair, and I asked that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry should tell the House about such developments before he told the press.

It subsequently transpired that the Secretary of State found the time during a busy day to come to the Palace of Westminster to brief lobby journalists about the matter, but is now saying that there are no significant developments on which to make a statement. Surely the Secretary of State would not have found time in his busy day to come here and tell lobby journalists what they could have read for themselves in yesterday's *Hansard*.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said that it was mischievous for Members of this House to try to get a statement on these important matters in the House of Commons. There is nothing mischievous about that. The replies from the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry yesterday were totally unsatisfactory. It is essential that these crucial matters, which concern the livelihoods of many thousands of workpeople throughout the country, many of whom we represent, should be chased with the figure responsible on that feeble Front Bench, and the figure responsible is the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He should come down here and make a statement on these matters and not get the easy ride that he does from press representatives.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

May I make a slightly different suggestion from that made by the shadow Leader of the House? The Leader of the House is listening intently to our exchanges, and he should be aware that the mood on both sides of the House is that we do not like Ministers giving detailed briefings on Government attitudes towards developments in the British motor car and truck industries without giving them to the House first. A statement tonight done in a rush would do nothing but create an attitude of uncertainty and panic. I hasten to add that, if there is a statement, I shall be here. However, it would be far better to have a statement tomorrow afternoon or on Thursday, after the Cabinet has taken a view on the Government's industrial policy towards the future of the car and truck industries. A considered statement would be much better than a panic statement, but a statement we must have.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Are we not trying to pursue a new constitutional point, in that every time a Minister gives a briefing to the lobby, we must have a statement?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

You have deprecated several times the practice of Ministers notifying the press or appearing on radio or television without notifying the House of the details first. As for the point about mischief-making, you will know, Mr. Speaker, that had not the matter been raised originally by my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), we would have had no information from the Government about what has happened. The manner in which the matter was raised originally gave rise to the present anxiety and controversy.

If a Minister deliberately treats the House with contempt, are we not entitled to appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that a statement is made as soon as possible? As my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East

(Mr. Faulds) said, this matter concerns many of our constituents, not only those directly employed by British Leyland. Many firms in the black country and the west midlands rely for their continuation on supplying component parts to that firm. In those circumstances, we must be entitled to a statement, and that statement should be made tonight.

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for any of these matters. The House knows that I cannot force the Government to make a statement. However, I notice from the Order Paper that there will be an Adjournment debate tonight on this very subject. It is likely that during that debate the Minister will say something which hon. Members who are making these points of order may wish to hear.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Is it not curious that the House should ask for such a statement when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has assured the House several times that, if he had anything further to report, he would do so? He made a statement to the House yesterday. Today, he met the lobby, as I understand it, further to explore what he said to the House yesterday. If there is nothing more to explain to the House, there is no point in his coming to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot answer points of order on such matters. I repeat that we shall have an Adjournment debate on this very matter. I think that we should wait to hear what happens then.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will take points of order from the three hon. Members who have been rising.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Not only was this matter raised by the Opposition on the original private notice question, in a half-day debate and during a Standing Order No. 10 application yesterday, but it is one which many people believe questions the Government's good faith in respect of their election mandate.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when you considered the application under Standing Order No. 10, you had to take account of whether there should be a debate in Government time. You turned down the application, for your own reasons, which might have been influenced by the statement and the subsequent questions that you heard yesterday. If there have been further developments—there clearly have been—[HON. MEMBERS: "How do you know?"] It appears most likely; there would not be such interest in this point of order otherwise—are the Government not failing to pay proper respect to the House and to you, Mr. Speaker, by not making the next statement to the House on a subject on which an application under Standing Order No. 10 might arise?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I really do not think that I can help the House in this matter. I fully understand its importance, but, as I have already said and as the House well knows, I am not responsible for statements. I and the House know, however, that there is an Adjournment debate on the subject.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps I might also contribute by endorsing what my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) said about this being a topic of great and general public interest which properly has to be considered by the House. Above all, it must be considered by the House in terms which are reasonable and well structured.

I want to counter the issue that gives rise to the claim that there should be a statement at this time of the evening or later. A lobby briefing was given in which there was some initiative in Government policy which resulted in journalists knowing what has not yet been revealed to the House. I have to tell the House that this was a matter of consideration through the usual channels. I am sorry that there could not be agreement.

I want to assert, however, that there is nothing extraordinary about a Minister seeing lobby journalists. Moreover, those lobby journalists know no more than hon. Members. There was no question of policy commitments being carried forward. *[Interruption.]* It is a matter of accepting the good faith of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I believe that he is entitled to claim that. Controversy can arise in a keen and lively fashion in this matter, but I do not accept the undermining of good faith in my right hon. Friend.

You have also said, Mr. Speaker, that the matter will arise on the Adjournment tonight, but even more important is the fact that this is the type of topic which is naturally at the centre of political interest. If Opposition Members ceased making applications under Standing Order No. 10, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak would pick up the baton. However, a case for a statement to be made this evening has not been made out.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Leader of the House has given a very fair explanation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of order only if they are directly concerned with my responsibilities.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): The Chairman of Ways and Means set down private business for 7 o'clock. You have previously told the House, Mr. Speaker, that it is improper for a statement to be made on a point of order. So far, 13 minutes of the time of my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) has been taken up. Will he get injury time?

Mr. Speaker: Private business does not get injury time.

Mr. Peter Shore: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I think that the House has not been satisfied with what the Leader of the House has said. An Adjournment debate replied to by a junior Minister is no substitute for a statement. If we cannot have a statement tonight, can we have one tomorrow?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a matter for me.

Mr. Biffen: I have already said that this matter is under constant examination, but I will say this to the right hon. Gentleman. After all that has been said about this topic, if this issue, with what it means for working people in the midlands and elsewhere, is to be conducted on the basis

[Mr. Biffen]

of dressing up the press lobby on the pretext for a debate this evening, we know what the motives of the Opposition are.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman can help me.

Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill *(By Order)*

Considered.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendments in the name of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes).

SCHEDULE

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT)

7.15 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 5, line 27, leave out '8·5' and insert '5·5'.

In the discussions between the Aberdeen harbour board and the Peterhead authorities, the chairman of the Peterhead trustees had earlier agreed to the amendment and, therefore, I hope that it might at least be accepted. I give notice that when we get to amendment No. 4, I will seek your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with regard to a manuscript amendment to delete "6·5" and insert "7·5".

It is necessary before dealing with the specifics of the amendments to give some background so that nobody is in doubt about the reasons for them. No one should be in any doubt that, despite the efforts of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) to trivialise and personalise the issue, the amendments are not hostile to the development at Peterhead. The amendments, if carried, would still allow the trustees' objectives for safer and better port facilities to be achieved. Nor should anyone be in any doubt that the objections to the scale of the development come from ports other than Aberdeen.

The amendments in my name have the approval of the Forth port authority and of the Dundee port authority, and the support of the Aberdeen stevedoring company. The amendments would still protect the harbour entrance, calm the waters of the inner and south harbours at Peterhead, increase the length of the cargo berths by 250 per cent., greatly improve facilities for the fishing fleet and allow any known deeply laden fishing vessel to berth. They would also allow for the handling of grain ships up to 6,000 tonnes. The evidence given by the Peterhead harbour master, Captain Auld, which appears on page 765 of the report of the inquiry of the parliamentary commissioners of Tuesday 7 May 1985 is consistent with that.

The amendments are tabled in a genuine spirit of compromise which holds out the prospect of advantage for Aberdeen, but would still meet the stated aims of Peterhead. I resent the intemperate manner in which the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan described these amendments as "wrecking amendments". I hope that, even at this late stage, he will accept them. His personal attacks on Mr. John Turner, the general manager of Aberdeen harbour board, are in very bad taste. Mr. Turner cannot respond in kind, but I say on his behalf that he has sought only to do his job properly. I, however, am able to respond to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan's personal attacks on me. I speak for the interests of Aberdeen,

although not under any instructions or orders of the Aberdeen harbour board. I must examine the evidence and form a judgment.

I was deeply resentful when I was telephoned at 7.30 this morning by BBC Radio Aberdeen to be informed that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan had accused me on the radio of double-crossing him last week. Had he made that charge in the House, I believe he would have been asked to withdraw it.

On Second Reading the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan scuttled around the Chamber, advising those of us who were waiting to take part in the debate that he was agreeable to the Bill being referred to a Joint Committee of both Houses of Parliament for further scrutiny. I was happy with that proposition and prepared to accept the findings of such a Joint Committee, whatever the outcome.

With the knowledge that referral was on offer, I truncated my speech, and I believe that other hon. Members did likewise. Indeed, although we can only speculate, if our speeches had not been so short the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan might not have received the assent of the Chair when he sought to move the closure motion. For reasons that have not been explained to the House, the hon. Member resisted the motion to refer the matter to a Joint Committee of both Houses. In that he was successful, so the will of the House was that the matter should not go to a Joint Committee. Of course, I accept the will of the House.

Mr. Jonathan Sayeed (Bristol, East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe the hon. Gentleman is reporting a private discussion. Is that in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): There has been nothing out of order in that respect so far.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. No doubt the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan can give his own response later.

Given the background which I have described, I utterly refute the charge of double-crossing. Such a charge might well be levelled against the hon. Member if there are to be any such charges.

Following Second Reading, I hoped and believed that bilateral discussions would take place between representatives of the two harbour boards. Discussions have taken place, but they have not achieved agreement. That is unfortunate because we had hoped that that would happen.

The hon. Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) asked if it was in order to repeat private discussions, but the discussions have not been in private. The matters have been referred to by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan in both *The Press and Journal* and the *Evening Express* in Aberdeen; they have also been referred to by him in conversations on the radio. Therefore, I am saying nothing in the House which has not been said elsewhere.

There have been many discussions among Members of Parliament with constituency interests. That takes me to the events of last Wednesday when the Bill was set down for further parliamentary discussion. During the days immediately preceding Wednesday there was talk of assurances being offered by the trustees of Peterhead harbour board that it would not handle oil-related traffic. As the assurances were not available in writing, efforts were made to ensure discussion on the Floor of the House so that we could find out exactly what the assurances were.

The hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson), to whom I have given advance notice that I would bring his name into the proceedings, is in his place. He put his name to the amendments which stand in my name on the Order Paper so that we might discuss the matter further. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan has made no secret of the fact—indeed, he has stated publicly—that he warned off his hon. Friend. One of the less colourful phrases which he used was that the hon. Member for Fife, North-East had never seen a fish, except on a plate.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman is talking absolute rubbish. He knows perfectly well that my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) represents a fishery constituency. If he were to get his facts right, he should be referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). He should read the Order Paper and find out exactly what is on it. Obviously he knows so little about the matter that he cannot even get the basic facts right.

Mr. Hughes: That demonstrates the problem we have had in trying to resolve the matter amicably.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Member should get his facts right.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member had better keep his peace until the time comes for him to speak. I had a pet Great Dane and a pet Doberman Pinscher. Taming a Buchan bulldog is no problem, so he had better behave himself. The hon. Member said that he had publicly warned off his hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for having told me that he would refer to me. May I say to him, as briefly as I can, that I have never been bullied by anyone to do anything in the House which I do not want to do, and I do not propose to start now. I disapprove considerably of the repetition of loose tittle-tattle and of conversations imagined or overheard in the Lobby outside the Chamber. At the time to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, I had a conversation with my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), when I told him that I was happy to be available for bringing together disparate interests if it would bring about peace in the dispute about fishing harbours. However, I was not prepared to stand in the middle of an argument between two interests where I did not have a direct constituency interest. My constituency interest is in both Peterhead and Aberdeen harbours being available to my constituents when they want to use them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think we should get back to the amendment.

Mr. Hughes: My remarks are germane to the amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I take your point. If the hon. Member for Fife, North-East cares to look up the Aberdeen *Press and Journal* and *Evening Express* he will find exactly what was said.

So that the issue might be resolved and so that we might have a discussion on it, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) was invited or encouraged to put his name to the amendments to protect the position. But he was persuaded that the assurances which were talked about last week were acceptable, and he withdrew his name. That left me, late

[Mr. Hughes]

last Wednesday night, with the position on the amendments and on the motion in relation to Third Reading unprotected. Therefore, I put my name to the blocking motion and to the amendments, for two reasons. First, I wanted to ensure that we might have a discussion on the matters and obtain the response of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. Secondly, I wished to see in writing or, more specifically, to read into *Hansard* the assurances which were apparently on offer. As the editorial in the Aberdeen *Evening Express* put it last Thursday:

"He could do no less."

Indeed, I could do no less than make sure that my constituency interest was protected.

At 6.25 pm today I was given a copy of a letter headed and addressed to Mr. John Turner, general manager, Aberdeen harbour board, which says:

"PETERHEAD HARBOURS
(SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT)
ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

In consideration of the Aberdeen Harbour Board withdrawing all their objections to the Peterhead Harbours (South Bay Development) Order Confirmation Bill, I am empowered by the Trustees of the Harbours of Peterhead to confirm that they have agreed:

'We will not seek oil related work for the Peterhead Harbours in the foreseeable future'.

We trust that your Board will find this acceptable as has already been indicated by Mr. Gerald Malone, M.P."

We now have the assurances in writing. They may well be consistent with the initial statement given by the promoters of the Bill. That is not fully acceptable to Aberdeen harbour board. I shall have to make my own judgment, but before giving that I would welcome the comments of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. Throughout the period in which we have discussed the Bill we have sought to get consistency among the ports on the east coast of Scotland and to ensure that the objectives of Peterhead harbour trustees have been met, and to do that in the absence of any Government policy or guidance about port facilities available on the east coast which we all know are grossly over capacity.

The amendments are worth while and should be acceptable. They have been put forward in a genuine spirit of compromise and agreement, with one harbour board being willing to consider the problems of the other. I hope a reciprocal case may be made by the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan.

7.30 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I should like to put on record my interest in this Bill and speak about the implications of the amendments and the eventual outcome. One of the saddest things about the progress of the Bill is the degree of bitterness that appears to have been generated between two neighbouring harbour authorities on the east coast of Scotland. That has not been an edifying event, nor is it in the best interests of port management and port authorities. Neither of the authorities emerged smelling like roses. The other thing we have witnessed is that it has caused a degree of animosity between Members of the House with neighbouring constituencies who have legitimate interests to defend. I do not want to dwell on that point. That animosity is regrettable, because the objective of all hon. Members must be to secure good neighbourliness.

I should like to see a development that could go ahead without threatening the survival of a neighbouring port while ensuring that another port is not unreasonably held back. The House will realise that in every sense of the word I am the man in the middle, because my constituency has Aberdeen harbour just outside on the south and Peterhead harbour just outside on the north. For that reason I am interested in the success and prosperity of both ports and I regret the conflict that has arisen.

I was interested to hear the contents of the letter that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) read, giving the assurances that seem to make the specific point that Peterhead harbour trustees will not seek to run an oil base in the foreseeable future. While that could not be regarded as a legally binding statement and is open to interpretation, I feel that it is a declaration of good faith. I think that Aberdeen harbour board is more concerned about some of the other activities at Peterhead harbour. They are legitimate activities in which Peterhead is already actively engaged, and it would be unreasonable not to allow those activities to develop.

There is now an element of compromise, and it is unfortunate that we could not get that compromise earlier. It is also unfortunate that we have had a number of false arrangements. Without those the Bill might have gone through the House to greater satisfaction all round not exactly without blood on the floor, but without so many sparks flying between individual hon. Members and between the relevant port authorities.

I hope that we will be able to make progress and allow this Bill to go ahead. That will be a clear statement that Peterhead is seeking to develop its own business in its own right and in its own way to the greater good and prosperity of the north-east of Scotland, and not in a way that is aggressively predatory on its neighbour, because that is clearly not in the interests of the ports of north-east Scotland.

I am as anxious as any other hon. Member to hear the reply of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie). I hope that he will reply in a constructive and conciliatory fashion that will enable us to proceed, to ensure that the development of Peterhead can go ahead, and that good relations will be restored between Peterhead and Aberdeen port authorities. Those things are in the interests of all of us who represent the north-east of Scotland.

Mr. Henderson: Like the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), I am anxious to see both these harbours operating effectively, and I am even farther away from them than he is. A number of fishermen from the east use both harbours and I share with the hon. Member for Gordon the anxiety that there seems to have been a falling out between these harbour authorities. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that neither of the authorities is smelling like roses. Aberdeen harbour would be a busier place and would have greater trade if it was not for the restrictive practices that we have seen there for too many years. Peterhead would do better for itself and better by the fishing industry if it did not overfill its fish boxes.

It may well be that for reasons of parliamentary practicality my hon. Friend or the harbour authorities will make arrangements to bring about peace and get the legislation through. I deplore the fact that that kind of deal is necessary for the reasons that have been advocated. It is a case of one interest using the difficulties of

parliamentary procedure and private legislation to pursue its interests in the House. Private legislation procedures were designed to give legitimate room for objectors to plans that directly affected people in the locality. That is not the kind of thing included in some of the suggestions put forward.

If a local authority or harbour trust or any other owner of a harbour wants to carry out harbour works and has to bring in a provisional order or an order of confirmation, leaving aside whether such a thing ought to have to be done in every case for harbour works, there should be some understanding that the harbour authority must be allowed to do what is necessary for the benefit of its harbour and for the community in which the harbour is set. The considerations about whether a harbour owner should or should not be allowed to carry out the work should be decided on how the work will affect people in the immediate vicinity and not people some distance away who are pursuing commercial interests of their own.

Mr. McQuarrie: I regret that it is necessary for us to come back to the House to deal with this matter yet again. I regret also that I must take issue with the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) for his unwarranted attack upon me. It is quite unfair and untrue for the hon. Gentleman to say that I had an agreement before the end of the Second Reading which I did not honour. He knows perfectly well that the two votes taken in this House on 16 January were taken on the closure. He has only to look at the record to see that 119 hon. Members voted in favour of that closure.

The following vote about a referral to the Joint Committee was also defeated. Those two votes reflected the will of the House, and the following day I spoke to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North in the Committee Corridor and I asked him, "What is your position about this Bill?" He said, "As far as I am concerned it is finished. I will accept the will of the House. When it comes to consideration and Third Reading I will not oppose it." I accepted that as the word of an hon. Member.

I spoke to the hon. Member on Wednesday and he gave me to understand that if an assurance was given by Peterhead harbour trustees that they would not seek oil-related work in Peterhead harbour after the extension was completed, that would be satisfactory to him and he would not oppose the consideration and Third Reading. I obtained the assurance about oil-related work from a majority of the trustees and I brought down to the House that evening——

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McQuarrie: No, I will not. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to develop my argument. I brought to the House that evening a copy containing signatures of the majority of trustees of Peterhead harbour and I handed a copy to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North. In that document is the very wording that the hon. Gentleman has quoted from the copy of the letter which he says he received this evening at 6.25. The Peterhead harbour trustees said:

"We will not seek oil related work for the Peterhead Harbours in the foreseeable future."

Mr. Robert Hughes: The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) has confirmed my impression of last Wednesday, that he got assurances from the majority of the trustees. That is different from an assurance by Peterhead trustees that they had held a formal meeting to assent to that. It was to clear up that confusion that I put down the blocking motion. The hon. Gentleman confirms exactly what I said earlier.

Mr. McQuarrie: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments, but I want to clear his mind about the situation. He must accept that he asked me to be assured that this declaration of intent, if I can call it that, given by Peterhead harbour trustees would be in his hands before the Bill was called in the Chamber last Wednesday. I got that assurance because time was short and I had to get the assent of the various Peterhead trustees. There was certainly no time to hold a meeting of trustees. Mr. Colin MacRae, the trustees' clerk, went to all the trustees and obtained their consent to the wording.

Paragraph 8 on page 2 of the statement on behalf of the promoters in support of Second Reading and against the motion to refer the Bill to a Joint Committee—which statement was available last Wednesday in the Vote Office—states:

"The Trustees do not conduct any oil-related business and they have no intention of doing so when the harbour has been extended. The additional berthing space is required for fishing vessels and general cargo boats. Oil supply-boats are served either in the adjacent Bay of Refuge, which is not managed by the Trustees, at Aberdeen, where the berthing capacity is far greater and the facilities are more suitable, or elsewhere."

What greater guarantee could the Aberdeen harbour board and its general manager, Mr. John Turner, want? That was a statement of intent, which was available to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North and other hon. Members. Hon. Members got what they wanted, but they persisted in their objections.

The objections persisted because Aberdeen harbour board was determined that the Bill would not see the light of day in the House and in the other place. If it could maintain its blocking actions, it was determined to do so. As proof, I refer to the letter sent by Mr. John R. Turner to the chairman of the Peterhead harbour board on 15 January 1986. Its most pertinent sentence states:

"We still have many friends in both Houses of Parliament, many of whom have not yet shown their hand."

We have enough experience to know that that is a threat. It is not the language of compromise. It is a threat—"Do as I do, or I shall get you." The letter continues:

"Your Bill could still be talked out, or continue to be repeatedly blocked."

Is that the language of compromise? I do not think so, nor would any hon. Member who listened to that statement.

For that reason, we have been faced with a great difficulty, which should never have arisen. The Bill was given a careful Second Reading. It was debated from 7 pm to 9.40 pm, and hon. Members had an opportunity to speak. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North suggested that he curtailed his speech, but I remind him that he spoke for 18 minutes that night and sat down when he felt like doing so. He was not compelled to do so. He had finished his speech and, as far as the House was concerned, he had said his piece.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North has tabled four amendments. On amendment No. 1, if no dredging is permitted beyond 5·5 m below mean low-water springs, the first 40 m of the new south quay—work No. 3—would be at a depth of less than 8·5 m at mean low-water

[Mr. McQuarrie]

springs. This would exclude ships in the 6,500 tonne class which draw 7 m or 7·5 m. Allowing 1 m for rough weather, it is essential to have a depth of 8·5 m.

Despite what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North said, there are no objectors to the Bill, apart from the Aberdeen harbour board. No hon. Member has been given the power to object on behalf of other authorities. Other authorities made their objections known during the public inquiry, but they have not sought to reiterate that objection on Second Reading. The views of Aberdeen harbour board were heard through the medium of hon. Members.

A depth of 5·5 m below mean low-water springs is insufficient to enable the new south quay to take vessels in the 7,000 to 9,000 tonne range. The Aberdeen harbour board does not act, as it has purported, on behalf of residents. The chairman of the Peterhead harbour trustees and Captain A. D. Auld have confirmed that at no time had the trustees suggested a compromise in any unofficial meeting with the chairman and the general manager of the Aberdeen harbour board. They found it impossible to reach agreement with the Aberdeen harbour board, despite holding a number of meetings. The Peterhead harbour trustees did lead evidence on the requirement for the depth of water needed to take the size of the vessels envisaged.

Amendment No. 2 proposes to shorten the length of the proposed new south quay by more than half from 303 m to 125 m. This will restrict the class of ship that can enter the harbour. About 90 per cent. of the ships in the 6,500 tonnes class are 135 m in length. They could not be moored beside a quay of only 125 m.

If amendments Nos. 1 and 2 are accepted, the maximum size of ship that the harbour could accommodate would be about only 3,000 tonnes. This would seriously damage the scheme's economic viability, as the ships now using the harbour to load grain are greater than 3,000 tonnes. Most of the cost of the works is attributable to dredging and blasting. Contrary to what has been alleged in the Aberdeen harbour board's notes on its amendments dated 16 January, which it sent to hon. Members, it will be impossible to bring in a ship in the 24,000 tonne category, or anything like it. Such a vessel would have an average draught of 11 m and a length of 180 m. Even at high water, such a ship would be aground when berthed beside the new quay.

7.45 pm

The Aberdeen harbour board and its representatives are fully cognisant of the fact that it is impossible to handle vessels of more than 9,000 tonnes at its south breakwater quay. Vessels above that size require the assistance of tugs, which Peterhead does not possess and has no intention of acquiring. Perhaps that is another guarantee that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North would like. Vessels of this size would call only occasionally at the port. The Peterhead bay harbour already handles such cargoes. The Peterhead harbour trustees have never handled this type of trade, nor can they possibly do so. Because of the draught of such vessels and because the entrance to the harbour is on a lee shore, vessels of such size could not be manoeuvred. Construction of the south breakwater is expected to create a berm at approximately 8·5 m, give or take a metre or two, and Aberdeen harbour board knows that.

I turn to amendment No. 3. For purely technical reasons, a downward limit of deviation of 1·5 m is needed. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North has proposed a deviation limit of 0·5 m. Underwater rock blasting creates an inverted cone-shaped hole and the varying and unpredictable nature of the seabed makes it impossible to blast economically within a range of 0·5 m. The downward limit of deviation has been agreed with the Department of Transport. Ground conditions will require the removal of small pockets of soft or loose materials to gain a good foundation, and 1·5 m should be adequate — 0·5 m would certainly not be adequate.

The trustees have demonstrated that they have no intention of handling vessels of the 24,000 tonnes rate and that those vessels will be handled only in Aberdeen. The vessels that require a larger draught are needed to move grain. Aberdeen harbour board has said that grain work is declining. If that is so, why has the port of Aberdeen constructed a grain quay at the expense of several million pounds? The Grampian regional council has decided that because the grain comes from the hinterland it should be handled by regional harbours covered by the Grampian regional council. A letter from the Buchan branch of the National Farmers Union of Scotland in connection with the extension to the quay states:

> "Grain has been exported from the port for many years, building up to 150,000 tons of barley and 25/30,000 tons of other grains, coming close on 200,000 tons per annum. . . We believe that to maintain the high standard experienced over many years . . . the extension of the harbour is essential."

The branch has no hesitation in wholeheartedly supporting the proposal of the Peterhead harbour board.

Amendment No. 4 asks that the depth of water within 5 m of the north face should not exceed 6·5 m. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North has referred to that. About 260 m of work no. 3 on the new south quay will stand in an existing natural depth of 8·5 m and more. Rock infilling to provide the foundation to the new quay will restrict the depth to 8·5 m, but for the trustees to have to fill in the seabed more than that deliberately to restrict the draught of vessels cannot be justified. Allowing for an underkeel clearance of one, 6·5 m at mean low water springs would accommodate a vessel of about 3,000 to 4,000 tonnes. However, coupled with amendment No. 1, not even a vessel of that size could be accommodated at the new south quay. Amendment No. 4 contradicts amendment No. 1.

I have given the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North the assurances that he seeks in respect of the oil-related work that Aberdeen harbour board does not wish to be removed from its port. That assurance has been given to the hon. Gentleman in the statement that was available in the Vote Office and in a letter. If the hon. Member were really interested in the welfare of the fishermen, he would realise that the extension is paramount to them and not to any other trade, although it is allied to others. The extension is being built for the benefit of the fishermen. I hope that having heard my comments the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North will not divide the House, but that he will withdraw his amendments and allow the Bill a safe passage.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): If delaying the Bill last Wednesday served any purpose, it was that at least at 6.25 pm this evening we received an assurance from the Peterhead harbour board trustees that they would not seek oil-related work in the foreseeable future.

It is interesting that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) should say in his closing remarks that the developments were primarily to ensure the safety of fishing vessels. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), and the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) and I agree on the need to ensure the safety of fishing vessels. The amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North would meet that requirement. If the safety of fishing vessels using Peterhead harbour was the only matter at stake, the amendments could safely be accepted. Every fishing vessel that uses or is likely to use Peterhead harbour could continue to use it with more safety after the development if the amendments in terms of water depth, tide levels and rock blasting were included. The amendments would not jeopardise safety. They would add to the safety of fishing vessels using Peterhead harbour and the proposed new south bay development.

Safety is not all that is at stake. The safety of fishing vessels is not the centrepiece of the Bill. We must be openly honest with ourselves and realise that the purpose of this privately promoted legislation is to extend Peterhead facilities into an area of land that the Peterhead trustees do not own. That has provoked the legislation and not developments that might take place at Aberdeen, Grangemouth, Leith or any of the Forth ports. Those developments take place on land owned by the Forth ports authority. The Peterhead harbour authority does not own the land on which the development is proposed. The Bill has been promoted not primarily in the interests of the safety of fishermen, but to expand the facilities at Peterhead to take in vessels of a greater tonnage.

I accept what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said about grain exports. I am glad that the Peterhead harbour trustees have put assurances in writing, not only to the Aberdeen harbour board but to other ports. I suspect that Montrose is also involved. I am glad that the Solicitor-General is with us in the debate. I am grateful that those assurances have gone to other ports that depend heavily on oil-related work to sustain employment. I know that Mr. Turner, the general manager at Aberdeen harbour authority, would welcome the assurance of Peterhead harbour trustees that they will not seek oil-related work in the foreseeable future.

The Peterhead harbour trustees will be held in the years to come to the commitment that has been given in writing and that has now been put on the record of the debate. That is important for Aberdeen and Montrose and any port on the east coast of Scotland that deals with oil-related work. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) for objecting last Wednesday to the Bill going through on the nod, because that has given us the opportunity to place those guarantees on the record.

When the harbour master at Peterhead, Mr. Auld, gave evidence to the public inquiry chaired by Lord Hughes, he made it clear that vessels of a tonnage not exceeding 5,000 were envisaged—in other words, vessels used for the export of grain. The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan was talking, not of vessels under 5,000 tonnes, but of ships between 5,000 and 7,500 tonnes. That makes a massive difference to grain exports. While I am prepared to accept the Bill tonight, I would be failing in my duty to the east coast ports which at present handle grain exports if I did not register my fear that the development of Peterhead harbour to take vessels up to 7,000 tonnes for exporting grain can have only a detrimental effect on the trade in grain from east coast ports.

Mr. McQuarrie: Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that a grain exporter on the Forth, in Grangemouth or Montrose, would transfer grain all the way to Peterhead for export, rather than export it from those other ports? The only reason why the docks are being extended is to accommodate the grain brought from the hinterland to be sent out from Peterhead, and the importation of lime and fertiliser, which is solely for my constituency and others near Peterhead.

Mr. Ewing: With great respect—usually when a politician says "with great respect" he is about to describe the person about whom he is talking as lacking in knowledge—I am sorry to tell the hon. Gentleman that his intervention betrays his lack of knowledge about what is happening in our ports at present. Exporters do not pay the road haulage costs between the point where the product is produced and the port of export. That is why our ports are suffering so much from the grid system, under which the ship owner pays the road haulage costs from Perth and further afield, not to Peterhead, but to Felixstowe.

Of all goods for export which have their manufacturing base in Scotland, 75 per cent. are exported from Felixstowe. They are not exported from Scottish ports because the vessel owners find it cheaper to pay road haulage costs to Felixstowe than to have the vessel steam to Grangemouth, Leith or Montrose to collect the goods. I doubt whether the Peterhead harbour trustees will pay the road haulage costs of grain exporters from Tayside, Fife, Central region, south-west Scotland or another agricultural area, which seems to be what the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

Mr. McQuarrie *rose*——

Mr. Ewing: I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has been rather impetuous. He must remember that when Peterhead is developed it will be a non-scheme port, and so will trade at a distinct advantage to the scheme ports on the east coast which are part of the national dock labour scheme. However the hon. Gentleman seeks to present his argument, Peterhead harbour will be at an advantage.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Gentleman must not seek to put on the record that the Peterhead trustees or I are endeavouring to estabish a system under which they will pay for grain to come to Peterhead from any part of Scotland. They have no intention of doing so. The hon. Gentleman should not put across a message for which there is no justification. He is being extremely unfair to the Peterhead harbour trustees and to me to suggest that. He knows perfectly well that that is not so. He is not even sowing a seed which is a possibility. What he has said is unrealistic and most unlikely to happen.

Mr. Ewing: I admire the authority with which the hon. Gentleman speaks on behalf of the Peterhead harbour trustees, and I hope that in years to come that authority will be backed up by their actions. We can only wait and see, as a former Prime Minister once said.

The possibility of oil-related work no longer worries me, but grain export work gives me cause for serious anxiety. The hon. Gentleman said that Grampian regional council thought that all grain from Grampian region should be exported through what he described as regional

[Mr. Ewing]

harbours, whatever that means. I should have thought that Aberdeen was a regional harbour in the Grampian region, so I am not sure what he means. If the Peterhead development is to be justified financially, and if there is to be an adequate return on the £17 million capital investment — Conservative Members are always in favour of that——

Mr. McQuarrie: £13 million.

Mr. Ewing: It will be £17 million before the job is finished. Big capital projects have a nasty habit of exceeding the original estimated cost. If the development is to be justified financially, the farmers in the region will have to grow far more grain than at present, and I do not believe that that is possible. That is what leads me to fear that grain will be drawn from other ports on the east coast to Peterhead. While I shall allow the Bill to go through tonight, I do so with fear and no little trepidation.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I understood that amendment No. 1 was acceptable to the chairman of Peterhead harbour board, and that amendment No. 2 was not to be moved because it would represent a concession by Aberdeen harbour board.

I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie), and I share many of the fears of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing), who is worried about both oil-related and non-oil-related traffic. We now have assurances, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman confirmed the views of individual trustees which were presented to me on a piece of paper last Wednesday. We are here tonight precisely because that piece of paper was not good enough and because I wanted assurances in a proper form. I have fears not only for the future of Aberdeen but for the viability of Peterhead. I also have fears about the viability of the east coast ports in Scotland and for all the ports in the country because of gross over-capacity. The Government ought to have stepped in with a proper ports policy.

I know the constituency of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan extremely well. I have many friends and relatives there. The suggestion that we were in some way trying to disrupt Peterhead and stop it having safe refuge and safe harbour is nonsensical.

Having heard the assurances, and despite the fact that they are not totally acceptable to the Aberdeen harbour board, at the end of the day I and the House must justify our decisions and I must make my own judgment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Bill to be read the Third time tomorrow.

British Railways (No. 2) Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

8.10 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill, in common with its predecessors, stems from the duties placed upon the board by the Transport Act 1962:. As the House will know, I have had the privilege of proposing the Second Reading of a number of these Bills in the past. It may therefore be for the convenience of the House if I spell out the duties placed on the board by the Transport Act 1962:

"It is the duty of the Board under the said Act of 1962 inter alia, to provide railway services in Great Britain and, in connection with the provision of railway services, to provide such other services and facilities as appear to the Board to be expedient, and to have due regard, as respects all those railway and other services and facilities, to efficiency, economy and safety of operation."

The Bill is yet another milestone in establishing a safe, economical and viable railway system. Much of the Bill is concerned with the electrification of the east coast main line and related works. There are other matters which I shall refer to in my remarks.

It may again be for the convenience of the House if I define what is meant by the east coast main line. That means the railway between King's Cross station in London and Edinburgh with a branch line to Leeds. Part I of the Bill defines the terms and objectives and incorporates certain general Acts in common with Acts of this type. Part II, clause 5, deals with the power to make works and to maintain them. Part III, clauses 24 to 37, gives power to carry out bridge works and these are the bridges concerned in the electrification of the east coast main line. Part IV deals with the purchase of land. Part V covers the incorporation of works provisions. Part VI deals with certain protective provisions which again are common to these Bills which relate to the Crown, police, electricity, gas and water authorities. Part VII deals with the miscellaneous provisions and there are two matters of some interest in this part of the Bill. Part VIII deals with general provisions which are standard planning, appeals, arbitration and the cost of the legislation. The schedules are self-explanatory.

The proposed changes in the Bill are necessary because of the changes in use patterns generally, the new arrangements with local authorities which are being established by the board and a general policy of good housekeeping. Hon. Members will see that the Bill is in fact a substantial document. It deals with a number of matters other than those to which I have already referred, namely the electrification of the east coast main line.

While I do not intend to recount all these changes unless hon. Members wish to refer to specific alterations, there are one or two changes which I shall highlight as they evidence the points I am trying to make. Clause V, concerns work No. 2, the new road and footpath at Bull's Lock, Newbury. This level crossing, which also carries a public footpath, is regarded by the British Railways Board as one of the most hazardous on the western region. It is situated on a curve; the maximum line speed at that point is 100 mph, and there is only limited visibility in each direction. The potential dangers are enhanced by the fact that the road approaches to the crossing are steeply graded, thus restricting visibility for road users. Additionally,

there is a history of indiscipline in the operation of vehicular gates by authorised users, and a number of near misses have been reported. Such use as has been made of the telephone installed at the crossing to enable drivers of road vehicles and those herding cattle to check with the signalman that the way is clear before crossing has been erratic to say the least. For a number of years, the board has wished to close the crossing and if the powers proposed in the Bill are granted by Parliament, the board will do so.

That is a good example of trying to meet the criterion which I established at the beginning of my remarks to make the service safer and more efficient. The board will no doubt have many other opportunities in the future to carry out this type of improvement and clause V is a good example of what we are trying to achieve in the Bill.

Similarly, in part II there is in clause 17 an example of what I mentioned earlier, namely, the relationship between the British Railways Board and the local authorities. As an example, I cite the case of Ermine street level crossing at Hibaldstow, Humberside. Under the Humberside county council's road scheme for the Brigg and Redbourne bypass, a length of Ermine street on either side of the Ermine street level crossing will be stopped up by the county council while it constructs a bridge to carry the new road over the railway a few yards west of the crossing. That will mean the isolation of the crossing from the rest of the road system and therefore, as a matter of good housekeeping, the board seeks power formally to stop up Ermine street between the crossing gates upon the completion and opening for public use of the new road. I cite those two examples, but there are others in the Bill and if hon. Members wish to refer to them I shall do my best to deal with them if I have permission to speak again.

Part VIII of the Bill, under miscellaneous provisions, deals with an important change in the pension schemes of the British Railways Board. In clause 45, it is proposed that the board shall constitute a new pensions scheme entitled "British Rail Pension Scheme". That scheme will acquire the assets and liabilities of two other existing schemes, namely, the British Railways (Wages Graded) Pension Fund and the new section of the British Railways Superannuation Fund. Bringing these two funds together under one heading and bringing the assets and liabilities together in the way I have described will make the operation of the new scheme more efficient. The new scheme will obviously be much larger and hopefully will be more secure against the fluctuation in the values of assets.

I want to make it clear that, in any changes of the kind that I have described, no benefits will be prejudiced in any way and that the people who will benefit from the scheme will be completely protected. It might again be worth noting that statutory authority is being sought on this occasion because of the enormous size of the assets involved. The total assets of the existing schemes total some £3,000 million. That is a very large operation indeed. I wish to make it clear that the new scheme should be an improvement and in no way a diminution of the services provided by the board's pensions schemes in the past.

I should like to draw the attention of the House to clause 47 which comes under the miscellaneous provisions. It has caused some anxiety, because it relates to Hungerford bridge, which is not far from here. The clause relates to that part of Hungerford bridge alongside Charing Cross station which extends from ground level in Villiers street to the point where it meets the flight of steps leading to the Victoria embankment, adjacent to the Embankment station. The change is being made because of the habits of vagrants who sleep and occupy the bridge to the discomfort of pedestrians. The bridge has to be closed, which means that pedestrians cannot use it.

The entire length of Hungerford bridge is supposed to be a public thoroughfare. Section 8 of the Metropolis Toll Bridges Act 1877 requires the board to maintain and keep the bridge in substantial repair, suitable and open to the public at all times, for every description of foot traffic. Section 30 of the Act permits the board to stop up and discontinue any part or parts of the footbridge upon substitution of an alternative route for pedestrians which is adequate and proper.

Notwithstanding those statutory duties, for a number of years the board has found it necessary completely to close the length of the footbridge to which clause 47 relates because the covered portion adjacent to the steps leading down to Villiers street was being misused and being occupied at night by vagrants. That resulted in numerous complaints from rail travellers and other members of the public.

In an attempt to combat that problem, the board for a number of years has been nightly locking the gates giving access to the footbridge from Villiers street and at the top of the steps leading down to the Embankment. The board's staff, who were responsible for locking, were being threatened and subjected to much verbal abuse when they tried to evict the vagrants from the covered portion. That prompted the board to close the entire length of the footbridge.

Following discussions with the GLC and Westminster city council, the board has agreed to improve the covered portions of the footbridge and, upon completion of the improvements, to reopen the footbridge. In return, and subject to clause 47 passing into law, the GLC and Westminster city council will relieve the board of its obligations under sections 8 and 30 of the 1877 Act to which I have just referred. The city council has agreed to accept the dedication of that length of the footbridge which will then become a walkway under section 35 of the Highways Act 1980.

I have taken a little time to explain that point, because the bridge is a famous London landmark and one does not want to do anything to limit access to it. I hope that I have explained that there are real problems in operating that part of the footbridge as we do at present. I hope that the new arrangements will be more satisfactory.

This is not a controversial Bill. There are, and will properly be in its later stages, opportunities for detailed consideration. It is yet another milestone along the route to making the British Rail system more efficient, safer and more acceptable to the travelling public.

8.23 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): It was not originally my intention to object to the Bill at this stage, but in view of what was said by the Chairman of Ways and Means at the end of the proceedings on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill last week, I thought that it would be useful to speak on this Bill now rather than when it came to the consideration of possible amendments.

I welcome the electrification of the east coast main line and all British Rail's proposals to improve and modernise it. My only complaint about British Railways Bills is that

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

in the past the board has obtained powers through the House but has not had the finance to carry out its proposals, and some of them have never come about.

I am worried about the way in which the Bill deals with footpaths. I am anxious about clauses 9, 11, 14 and 23, and the schedule, and clauses 28, 33 and 36. The point was made last week—I think it is one that the Chairman of Ways and Means accepts—that in some cases private Bills promoted through the House do not serve the best interests of local communities. It is not easy for local people who might use the footpaths to know of the Bill's existence. Most people who take their dogs out for a stroll, go along the footpaths in the summer, come back from their newspaper round, or whatever, do not look carefully at the British Railways (No. 2) Bill or any other of its private Bills.

It would be far more satisfactory if British Rail dealt with the closure or diversion of footpaths as anyone else would have to do, not by promoting a private Bill but by serving notice on the local authority and asking for a diversion or closure. Notices would then be put up on the footpath or bridge and local people would have the right to object. If there were objections, the objectors would have the right to a local inquiry. The inquiry inspector would make a recommendation in favour of or against the closure or of a diversion. Local people would enjoy a simple procedure.

Unfortunately, that has not happened in this case. We have a complicated procedure which is, on the whole, remote from local people—a private Bill. I suspect that one or two of the proposed closures will come as a surprise to many local people, because they will have been completely unaware of the Bill's existence.

I know that British Rail will counter that argument and say that, even if it went through the local procedure, as an Act created the footpath, probably by diverting an earlier footpath, it would also have to seek parliamentary approval.

We should be considering our procedures, but until we amend them I argue strongly that British Rail should go through the local consultation procedure of putting up notices and letting local people know whether the proposals would affect them adversely. If there were no objections, no one would need to take any action. If there were objections, their validity could be tested locally.

At the moment the procedure is unsatisfactory. Local people know nothing about the Bill. It is fortunate that with such a Bill the Ramblers Association checks carefully. If there is a series of footpath closures, it may decide to petition against the Bill. The Ramblers Association then starts to write to the local associations to find out whether anyone is interested in the matter. We do not know whether anyone locally is genuinely interested because once the Ramblers Association writes to the local association it thinks that it had better protect the footpath. We have the unsatisfactory position where action is motivated from the centre rather than locally. We have no clear idea whether there is strong feeling locally or whether the Ramblers Association and others are merely pursuing a matter of principle.

I plead with British Rail to deal with footpath matters for the time being by applying for local closure or diversion notices. Having obtained them, British Rail should incorporate them in the Bill, and it can then certify that the local inspector found in its favour after a local inquiry. If it cannot convince local people and the local inspector, the closure should be left out of the Bill.

I hope that that sort of consideration can be given. When the Bill goes into Committee and the Ramblers Association's petition is considered, British Rail will be able to say that, between Second Reading and the petition being heard, it has applied for local diversion and closure notices and the result is that in so many cases it has had a certain number of objections and in other cases it has not.

There may be some difficulties of time with the Bill. I wish to make it clear to the House that if British Rail does not follow that procedure, then I shall seek, on consideration, to put down amendments to those footpath closures. It is unsatisfactory that footpaths can be closed by means of a Bill without local people knowing about it.

I hope that when the House sets up a Committee to look into the private business procedure, it will consider the way that footpaths may or may not be closed by means of private Bills and will amend the Standing Orders to make it clear that proposals for footpath closures can only be put forward once there has been a local inquiry and the inspector has agreed that it is in the best interests of everyone for the footpaths to be closed.

8.31 pm

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): I am glad that I have been called on the Bill. I support the electrification of the east coast main line. I support the other clauses in the Bill and, if necessary, I shall vote for them tonight.

I wish to discuss other issues which involve the electrification of railway lines. The first matter concerns Stansted airport. British Rail is anxious to build a new line from Stansted station through to the airport. The Government's decision on the future of Stansted will be of crucial importance. My constituency would welcome that project going ahead. I hope that the line will be built from Stansted station through to Stansted airport and that it will have north and south facing connections. Thus, people will be able to travel from King's Lynn through to Cambridge and then to change and go from there to Stansted and on to the airport. It will obviously be a great benefit to my constituency.

I am also concerned about the railway line from London through to King's Lynn via Cambridge and Ely. I am slightly troubled because there are no measures in the Bill to electrify the stretch of line from Cambridge on to King's Lynn. We feel slightly left out because the London to Norwich line is almost completely electrified and the London to Cambridge stretch is being proceeded with at a pace and will probably be completed by May 1987. That, therefore, leaves the stretch of line from Cambridge through to King's Lynn, the chief town of west Norfolk and one of the most important towns of East Anglia. I cannot overstress the importance of the rail link. We have a reasonable service and a good timetable, but, alas, the rolling stock is fairly old and many improvements could be made. I pay tribute to the efforts and loyalty of the local British Rail staff who work tirelessly to provide the best possible service to Norfolk and especially west Norfolk.

We do have the odd complication, and unfortunately one such complication took place only 10 days ago. One of my constituents was travelling by train from King's Lynn to London. The constituent was subjected, alas, to eight stops and the train arrived 40 minutes late. My

constituent's breakfast also found itself on the wrong side of a locked door and the toilets in her compartment were filthy. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is aware of this incident and he has probably had a word with BR about it. I am glad to say it is the exception to the rule. At the time I made some comments about the incident to the local paper and I may have gone over the top. I did say it was a disgraceful incident and that, in future, I would have to think twice about encouraging the Minister, should he come to my constituency, to travel there by train. I received some flak in the local press for saying that—it is easy to say things on the spur of the moment. Of course I totally back that railway line and when the Minister does come to my constituency I hope that he travels by rail rather than car.

We need to have this stretch of line electrified. The rail link is crucial to King's Lynn. King's Lynn does not receive any regional aid. We are trying hard to get unemployment down and, over the past year or so, the unemployment level has been static. I believe we are winning the fight to create new jobs and the local economy, especially the small firms sector, is thriving. We are trying, all the time, to attract new firms into west Norfolk and into King's Lynn. We are also trying to improve the trunk roads. The borough council of King's Lynn and west Norfolk recently announced a major campaign to improve the A47 trunk road west from King's Lynn through to Peterborough into the midlands. The council is also backing me in my campaign to get the railway line electrified. We are trying hard to encourage existing firms to expand in King's Lynn, and we are trying to attract firms from outside. We are doing what we can to build up the economic base with a view to reducing unemployment. We are succeeding, and we shall continue to succeed.

We recently had the excellent news that a major national organisation, the Construction Industry Training Board, announced that it would relocate its London headquarters in west Norfolk. I have campaigned for that for some time behind the scenes with the CITB management. The board has its Civil Engineering College and its training centre at Bircham Newton. It therefore made sense for it to move its headquarters up to west Norfolk. I pushed that decision as hard as possible and the board announced, only last week, that it will look for a substantial number of new local employees to join the headquarters at Bircham Newton.

That is a major vote of confidence in west Norfolk and it bodes well for the future. I do not believe that that organisation or other organisations or companies would have come to west Norfolk, or indeed others will come, if they did not have confidence in the rail service. If incidents such as that which affected my constituent recently are repeated too often such companies may live to regret their decisions. I believe electrification will go ahead and it is important that it should proceed.

The docks at King's Lynn are also expanding and there is a good deal of scope for an increase in freight and industrial traffic. It is a chicken and egg situation. If one has a better service then there will be more domestic and commercial usage of that service. If there is not this level and quality of service then less custom will be attracted.

I believe that the electrification from Cambridge through to King's Lynn should proceed. The electrification of the Cambridge stretch should be completed by May 1987. If British Rail do not electrify the line from Cambridge to King's Lynn, there will be problems. A major rail service from London to King's Lynn will have an electrified service as far as Cambridge but a second rate service from there to King's Lynn. A different set of rolling stock will have to be maintained to provide the service for the second leg of the journey. That would make the line inefficient and in the long run more costly. The cost of maintaining diesel locomotives is high. They guzzle fuel and they require a great deal of care and attention to stop them from breaking down. If traffic fell off on that part of the line, it would be vulnerable in the future. I would fight tirelessly to keep it, and I know that the people of west Norfolk, the county council, the borough council, and everybody else involved would fight to keep that line.

If the line is not electrified, it could be vulnerable to a cost-cutting Government at some stage in the future—perhaps not in five or 10 years, but beyond that into the next century. It may be chopped by a future Beeching. If we spend money on electrifying the line, it will be saved for the foreseeable future. What is more, the electrification could go ahead on commercial grounds. British Rail has launched an appraisal of electrification from Cambridge to King's Lynn, the results of which will come out later in this year, and until we get that appraisal we shall not know the estimates and exact figures as to future traffic flows.

However, the terrain from Cambridge to west Norfolk is very flat. There are few bridges and it would be relatively cheap to electrify this stretch of the line. It would represent first-class value for money. If we do not electrify, we shall be putting in jeopardy the economic and commercial future of west Norfolk and the expansion of many firms there. Of all the issues facing my constituency at the moment, without doubt the most important are unemployment, economic growth and the development of the small firms and agricultural sectors, but all these things are dependent upon good communications, good roads and good railways.

Infrastructure is crucial to west Norfolk and there are times when I, as a Conservative Member, say that the Government should spend more money on certain parts of the infrastructure. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister agrees with me, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt). There are times when spending money on infrastructure for its own sake is not cost effective and will not create jobs, and in the long run will do the country economic damage. However, certain selective schemes can benefit a particular area and help firms there to get their goods to market, be more competitive and give them a more competitive edge against European rivals, so in this case the Government should go ahead.

For such a scheme, we are not talking about much money, probably under £10 million, but it will guarantee jobs, help to create new jobs, encourage the small firms sector and boost the image of an important part of the country. That is money well spent. I shall be pushing my hon. Friend the Minister, and as soon as the appraisal comes out I shall be meeting him and the chairman of British Rail to do all that I can to stress the case for this project. It is crucial to the economic well-being and industry of King's Lynn and to the future of many people in my constituency.

8.43 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): I apologise for not being present at the beginning of this debate and I hope that what I say has not already been covered by any hon. Member. I share the view of all those who have spoken about the need and the wish to see British Rail successful, efficient and commercially as viable as we can make it. I shall concentrate my remarks on a small aspect. However, I shall set them in a wider context because they give me cause for some concern about the way in which our railways are being run.

Over the past decade, my constituency has seen considerable growth in its population, much of which uses the west country main line from Exeter, through Newbury to London, to a great extent for commuting. People want a fast, efficient and reliable service and I am sorry to say that they have not always had that, certainly not in the past 12 months. They want as much warning as they can be given by British Rail about possible hold-ups and they want to be sure that they are aware of any likely problems that may cause them to take an earlier train or to change their timetable to London or for getting home. Therefore, I stress the need for a safe, fast, efficient and reliable railway, and in particular one that is safe for passengers and for those who have to cross the line.

When I received a letter dated 20 January from Mr. Simon Osborne, the principal assistant solicitor at British Rail, to remind me that the Bill was due for Second Reading soon, I read his letter with considerable interest. He kindly advised me about the section of the Bill that relates to the level crossing, known as Bull's Lock crossing, on the west of England main line near Newbury. He says:

"This crossing is regarded by the Board's operators as one of the most hazardous on the Western Region, being situated on curved track giving only limited visibility at a point where the maximum line speed is 100 mph. The potential dangers are enhanced by the fact that the road approaches to the crossing are steeply graded, thus restricting visibility for road users."

I have no doubt that he is correct in his comments, but that persuades me to ask the question, "If this danger has existed for so many years, why has the British Railways Board only now decided that it should do something about it?" I hope that I shall have an answer to that question tonight.

The letter continued:

"Added to this, there is a history of indiscipline in the operation of vehicular gates and a number of 'near misses' have been reported. Such use as is made of the telephone installed at the crossing, to enable drivers of road vehicles and those herding cattle to check with the signalman that the way is clear before crossing has been erratic, to say the least. Elimination of the crossing is therefore in everyone's best interests."

That statement worries me because I wonder how many other such crossings exist on British Rail main line routes and can be described as having

"a history of indiscipline . . . and a number of 'near misses' have been reported."

We deserve an answer from British Rail to that question, as the safety of those using crossings is at risk, as is, perhaps more so, the safety of passengers travelling in the trains using the crossings, and of possibly finding the crossing blocked off by somebody crossing in a vehicle, or even by animals being herded across the line. Why has British Rail only now decided that this is a hazard, and so hazardous that it deserves to find its way into the annual Bill? How many more crossings of this kind can be described as having

"a history of indiscipline . . . and 'near misses' have been reported."

What is involved in the work outlined in the Bill and its schedule? What does the work entail? In particular, would it affect trains crossing the culvert, because the idea is to re-route the private footpath and crossing through a culvert in the railway line? As comments on restructuring appear in the Bill, I wonder whether the work will affect trains using the line—for example, will they be able to pass over that part of the line only at a reduced speed thus clearly changing the projected arrival time at Newbury, Reading or Paddington? Will the culvert have to be strengthened, and when is work due to start? Last but by no means least, how much does the British Railways Board expect the work to cost and how soon does it think it will be finished once it is set in hand?

I believe that, although the Bill in its entirety seems to be worthy of the House's support, the points to which I have drawn the House's attention raise wider issues and make me ask whether British Rail is examining its lines as carefully as it should. The west country line is not new, it has been in existence for many decades, and to be told now that the crossing constitutes a serious hazard on a 100 mph stretch and to be told only in 1986 that British Rail thinks that something should be done about it leaves me with a horrid feeling that there may be other dangers lurking on other main lines which British Rail would do well to look at as a result of tonight's proceedings and set in hand the work required to make them safe if such work is needed.

8.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): It may be helpful if I give a brief indication of the Government's view of the Bill. The Government have considered the content of the Bill and have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the British Railways Board. A few minor points will need to be raised by the Department of Transport, but I have no doubt that they will be cleared up satisfactorily.

There are petitioners against the Bill and they will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Select Committee. The Committee will be in a much better position than we are tonight to examine in detail the issues involved and it will have the added advantage of having expert evidence. I recommend to the House that the Bill be given a Second Reading and be allowed to proceed to Committee in the usual way for that detailed consideration.

8.52 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: I shall deal first with the points raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) regarding footpaths and other matters. He will know that local publicity is given in those situations. The reason why some of the conditions to which he referred are not always answered is because the Highways Act 1980 does not always apply to the situations we are talking about this evening. However, I can tell him that the local newspaper carried advertisements about the closures in December 1985 and notices were posted at either end of the footpath in November 1985. Therefore, the board is anxious to ensure that local people are aware of what is happening.

As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, there are petitions, which will be considered in detail later. That is a valid

point, because ramblers and others use the footpaths and they have every justifiable reason to be aggrieved if they are suddenly closed and no proper warning is given. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's comments will have been noted by the board, and perhaps we can look at them again.

My hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) will be glad to know, as he probably does already, that the Airports Bill dealing with Stansted will come before the House soon. The point that he raised about the railway link with the proposed airport extension can be dealt with in that debate. However, I entirely agree with what he said about improving services in east Anglia and his own constituency. I assure him that the board has those matters under review and is anxious to press ahead with them. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for the Bill. I hope that we shall be able to ensure that all of his constituents enjoy better journeys than the ones to which he referred and the one which some of us read about in the newspapers not long ago.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) raised an important issue. It is alarming that dangerous stretches of the railway still exist without action being taken. The board has been negotiating with land owners in that area for a considerable time. Even tonight, I am not able to give my hon. Friend a firm date as to when the work will start because negotiations are still continuing. All the clause will do is give the board the necessary authorisation.

On the matter of the irresponsible behaviour of certain individuals, I can assure my hon. Friend that the railway police and others do what they can to ensure that breaches of regulations are dealt with, but, of course, they are somewhat overstretched. In a sense, the complaint which my hon. Friend makes points the need for these Bills. Many people have often thought that this sort of Bill should be handled by a Government Department, but, because the railways have been built over private land, special provisions have been required. The case of Bull's Lock crossing is a good example. Private landowners are concerned and it is partially for that reason that no action has been taken before. I made it clear in my opening remarks that the board is always anxious to find examples of danger and to deal with them as swiftly as possible. I can assure him that his remarks will be noted by the board and it will continue to do all it can to improve safety and efficiency.

I have tried to deal with the points raised by hon. Members. I commend the Bill to the House, because I believe that it provides yet another helpful step in the development of the railway system.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed.

Milford Haven Port Authority Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

8.57 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is a modest Bill. I am encouraged to be brief by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) who is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench. I tell the hon. Gentleman that, not only is it a modest Bill but it is a brief Bill. I wish that all legislation that came to the House were as brief. However, its brevity should not in any way diminish the importance of the Bill and I shall detain the House just a little to explain why it is important. I want to say why the promoters of the Bill have sought to move a private Bill rather than a harbour revision order. Some hon. Members may say that a harbour revision order was a better way to proceed. Section 62 of the Harbours Act 1964 gives a harbour authority the freedom to proceed either way. Despite the hopes initially entertained for the system, the harbour revision order is not particularly quick, simple or cheap. Even an unopposed order usually takes as long as a private Bill. An opposed order often takes more than a year even if it does not end in special parliamentary procedure. Some orders have taken much longer than that.

Furthermore, the harbour revision order procedure can confuse the issue by permitting objections to be made that are outside the strict scope of the order that has been promoted. At the time that the board of the Milford Haven conservancy decided to promote legislation there was in process in Whitehall a harbour revision order, promoted by the Warkworth harbour commissioners, which, having started as a simple order, became a lengthy and costly affair because of the ramifications permitted by the objection and public inquiry procedure for harbour revision orders. The order that was subject to that procedure did not come into effect until about two years and four months later. The general manager of the Milford Haven conservancy board advised the use of the private Bill procedure, not least because of what had happened at Warkworth.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): My hon. Friend has described graphically the gloom and doom side of the harbour revision order procedure, but does he agree that he is overloading that side of the matter and that it is possible for harbour revision orders to go through all the procedures far more quickly than that? It is not unknown for harbour revision orders to take no more than two months. Does my hon. Friend also agree that it is impossible for the private Bill procedure to take less than eight months?

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. All things being equal, even if a private bill is opposed, this private Bill, having been laid in November 1985, should reach its final stages in July 1986. My hon. Friend asks why a harbour revision order is not appropriate. I understand that he is to oppose this measure. That fact alone will extend the procedure in the way that I described at Warkworth.

The facilities at Milford Haven include five oil terminals that were built by oil companies—Esso, BP, Texaco, Gulf and Amoco—under powers conferred by an Act of Parliament in each case. Commercial facilities also include a ferry terminal that was built by the board at a total cost of £10 million, the facilities of Milford dock,

[Mr. Best]

an enclosed dock that is owned by a separate statutory harbour authority, the Milford docks company and some other fairly minor installations. The former royal dockyard at Pembroke dock has been largely sold into private ownership. The board's ferry terminal occupies part of the site but the Ministry of Defence retains a section at the western end of the dockyard. Apart from commercial traffic, the haven is extensively used for recreational purposes. The diversity of the operations in the harbour make it necessary to have on the board interests other than those represented by the oil companies.

Part I, schedule 1, to the Milford Haven Conservancy Act 1983 lays down that a representative of organised labour has to be on the board, a representative chosen after consultation with two district councils and with Dyfed county council. It is right that a broad diversity of views should be represented on a board such as this. The Bill is being promoted precisely for that reason: to ensure that no inhibition will be placed upon service on the board by anybody who might represent diverse views but who would be a significant contributor to the board's operations.

By the mid-1970s Milford Haven had become the largest oil port in Great Britain, handling nearly 60 million tonnes of crude oil and oil products. Since then, because of such factors as OPEC and the exploitation of North sea oil, the haven's oil traffic has been substantially reduced. However, in 1985 it was still in excess of 30 million tonnes of oil and other cargoes. In that year, slightly over 26 million gross tonnage of dues-paid vessels entered the port. Of the five oil terminals originally constructed, that owned by Esso is largely disused because of the closure of the Esso Milford Haven refinery, and the BP terminal has been taken over by Texaco as a result of BP's decision to phase out much of the capacity at its Llandarcy refinery which was supplied with crude oil by pipeline from Milford Haven.

The total capital employed by the board is approximately £20 million. Over the years about £10 million has been invested in a ferry terminal and about £7 million of capital expenditure was devoted to dredging the haven's deep water channel to enable 275,000 tonne tankers to be accepted on virtually every tide. Together with two subsidiary companies, the board's annual turnover is approximately £5·5 million. In recent years, average net surpluses before tax of about £1 million per annum have been achieved.

The objectives of the Milford Haven Port Authority Bill 1986 can be simply stated. The first objective is to change the name of the Milford Haven conservancy board to the Milford Haven port authority. The second objective is to provide the board with the power to pay fees to ordinary members—that is, members of the board other than the chairman, vice-chairman and executive members — as well as travelling and subsistence expenses.

To deal with the first of those objectives, the term "conservancy" in the board's present title has been the cause of much misunderstanding. It has been commonly assumed that the board's functions resemble those of the Nature Conservancy Council. It was for similar reasons that in recent years the former Harwich harbour conservancy board took steps to have the word "conservancy" deleted from its title. Furthermore, the title "Milford Haven Conservancy Board" has been a misnomer since 1975. Before then the board's functions were indeed confined to those of a conservancy authority, as the Harwich harbour board functions still are. In 1975, however, Parliament conferred on the board a considerable extension of functions and powers by the Milford Haven Conservancy Act 1975, all this legislation now consolidated in the Milford Haven Conservancy Act 1983. In general the board's current functions and powers resemble those of other major trust authorities in Great Britain.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Given that we have had the 1983 legislation, why did the Milford Haven Conservancy Board not bring forward the change of name and, indeed, the payment of non-executive members of the board? I understand that only one member of that board is non-executive and is not a salaried official of some oil company or other.

Mr. Best: It may well be regrettable that the matter was not brought into the 1983 Act, but I remind my hon. Friend that that was very much a consolidating Act.

Sir William Clark: My hon. Friend will surely agree that in a consolidating Act all the loose ends are tied up. I cannot see the justification for expenditure of some £8,000, £9,000 or £10,000 on a private Bill to change the title of a body or to pay the members of the board something that is already being paid by the private sector. Why is it necessary to increase the number of quangos —I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree with me in this matter—by paying fees to these non-executive people? There is no limit to the fees which they may be paid.

Mr. Best: It merely brings the board into line with other port authorities. My hon. Friend has really answered his own intervention. Although consolidating measures are helpful in tying together loose ends, if some loose ends are still flapping, I am sure that he would be the last person to argue that they should remain flapping in the wind for ever. The promotion of this Bill is the opportunity to ensure that those loose ends are tied up firmly and that the Milford Haven board is brought into line with other port authorities.

If I may deal with the point raised by my hon. Friend about the membership of the board, he will know that there are 12 members of the board. The chairman and vice-chairman are paid. There is facility under paragraph 19 of part 1 of schedule 1 to the 1983 Act, to which I referred, for payment of the chairman and vice-chairman. There is a general manager who is also paid. There are two representatives of oil companies, one from Gulf and one from Texaco, who are paid by their companies.

I remind my hon. Friend that there are people on the board who do not receive any remuneration from the oil companies or by virtue of their membership of the board or by virtue of being paid officials of the board. There is, for example, the representative of organised labour who receives not much remuneration, and there are those who are appointed after consultation with the two district councils and the county council. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree with me that there should be no inhibition on a representative of organised labour, often a retired trade union official, as in this case, Mr. Driscoll; or indeed on representatives of local authorities from serving on a port authority and taking a substantial and necessary part

in the way in which the port is organised simply because they are not given any remuneration. That would be unjust.

Mr. Burt: My hon. Friend will be aware that many local authorities appoint councillors to a wide variety of outside bodies and, as far as I am aware, the question of payment rarely, if ever, arises. Most local authority councillors accept the appointment to bodies with which the authority is connected as part of their duty, not something for which they should seek payment. Why should my hon. Friend seek, through the Bill, to breach that principle? Does he agree that it is dangerous to try to knock holes in the principle?

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend misunderstands the purpose of the Bill. Perhaps I have explained it inadequately, but, in fairness to me, I hope that he agrees that he has not given me much chance to explain it so far. The representatives who are appointed by the Secretary of State after consultation with the district councils and the county council are not necessarily councillors. Local authorities can recommend that any individual should serve on the board. Therefore, what my hon. Friend has just said is erroneous. He might be right if it was the invariable practice that everyone appointed as a result of the consultation between the Secretary of State and the local authority was a member of that authority. But that does not follow under the Act. The local authority is not obliged to put forward the name of one of its members, nor is the Secretary of State obliged to appoint a member of the authority.

My hon. Friend is saying that there should be a financial inhibition on people serving on an authority, such as a port authority, because they will receive no remuneration and are being asked to give their time free when the representatives of the oil companies are already being paid decent salaries—one does not begrudge them that—by the oil companies concerned.

In a moment, I shall deal with another anomaly in the stance of the oil companies. It was an oil company that proposed a measure, which was adopted and is now enshrined in the Bill, to enable the fees that might otherwise be payable to a member of the oil company to be paid to the parent oil company, so that the company would benefit in any event.

The Bill is designed simply to facilitate payment. It does not provide an obligation to make payment. It is simply an enabling Bill to allow the port authority to make payments to individuals as it sees fit. Most other port authorities which have a similar power exercise it to give some remuneration — usually a very small sum and nothing which could be regarded as a living wage—to those who serve on them. *[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friends will allow me, I shall proceed, because it is important to explain all the matters. Perhaps they would do me the honour of waiting to hear what I have to say, and then no doubt when they catch your eye, Mr. Speaker, they can make their own points.

May I deal with the proposed power to pay ordinary board members fees? The Bill includes such a provision because it is thought to be unreasonable that members of the boards who devote time and effort to the conduct of the boards' affairs, and who may have no income derived from business in and around the haven, should not be remunerated apart from having their reasonable expenses met. The proposed power would be discretionary — it would be for the board to resolve whether to exercise it and, if so, at what level to fix ordinary members' fees. Any fee offered could, of course, be waived by the member, and there is also provision for a fee to be paid to a member's sponsoring body if he so desires. As I said a moment ago, that was proposed by an oil company representative on the board.

As will be stated later, the power is well precedented in other ports. The Rochdale report of 1962 will be well known by my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) and for Bury, South (Mr. Sumberg). No doubt it has been their bedside reading for a long time in preparation for this debate. At paragraph 95, that report recommended that non-executive members of port boards should be paid a fee

"as in the case of other statutory authorities or boards of public companies, the fee to be appropriate to the demands and responsibilities of the appointment."

The report also said:

"The purpose of this provision will be self-evident."

It is in order for me to say something about the Bill's history. The idea of proposing a Bill and its content was put before the board in a paper by its chairman. It was circulated for discussion at the board's meeting in January 1985. There was lengthy discussion during which a variety of views were expressed. At the end, the board resolved to proceed with the Bill and authority was given to apply to parliamentary agents to draft it.

The Texaco representative was absent. The Gulf representative showed a distinct lack of enthusiasm for the proposal to pay fees to ordinary members, but he did not ask for a vote or for any dissenting view to be recorded in the board's minutes, which were duly approved at the following board meeting. The minutes of that board meeting, on 18 January, say this inter alia:

"The chairman said that while some members might have reservations, the majority were clearly in favour of the board taking power to pay fees to ordinary members."

I can provide a copy of the minutes if my hon. Friends would like that. They continue:

"In further discussion, general agreement was reached that a private Bill should also provide for a change of the board's title to Milford Haven Port Authority."

For the board meeting in September 1985, copies of the draft Bill were circulated to board members. They were also sent to the oil company refinery managers who have not served on the board, including a Mr. Havers of Amoco. At that meeting, both oil company representatives were present. One of them proposed that the draft Bill should be amended to provide that a member could ask for a fee to be paid to the body that employed him or otherwise was involved in his appointment to the board, rather than to himself. It is strange that the oil company representatives agreed, maybe tacitly, but certainly did not dissent from the idea that there should be payment of fees. Indeed, one was so non-dissentient that he proposed an amendment to how fees could be paid—to the parent body rather than to the member. It lies somewhat ill in the mouth of oil companies to say now at this late stage that they object to these modest proposals.

Mr. Burt: It is not unknown for people to formulate views over a period of time. In this case, the dissent of oil companies was made known early. It is clear from my hon. Friend's description that the oil companies' representatives are in a considerable minority and that their objections carry little weight if the other members of the

[Mr. Burt]

board are opposed to the oil companies. Their anxiety has led to this debate. My hon. Friend cannot suggest that, because the matter has to go through a certain procedure before coming here, although the oil companies objected but could do nothing because of their slight power on the board, they could do anything other than allow the matter to come here. My hon. Friend cannot suggest that the matter coming here after all this time suggests a heartfelt change in attitude such as to make the oil companies' comment in any way reprehensible.

Mr. Best: I can only assume that my hon. Friend has come uncharacteristically unprepared to the House. It is quite clear that he has not seen the minutes or discovered what proceedings took place. If he had read the minutes, he would realise that the oil companies raised no objections from January last year, when the matter was first proposed at a board meeting, until the beginning of this year. Indeed, the oil companies went along with the rest of the board. Both representatives were able to call for a vote or for objections to be entered in the minutes, but not once did they do that.

Mr. Burt: On that point alone would not my hon. Friend agree that in a board of 12, where the oil companies have two representatives, the mere calling for a vote just for the sake of the record is pointless?

Mr. Best: It is not pointless. If one feels strongly enough about a matter, presumably one would wish to have that objection registered. The objection was not registered. No opposition to the Bill was expressed at the meeting in September when the draft Bill was in front of the board. Indeed, the approved minutes of the meeting record that its content was generally approved.

At the beginning of November the Amoco refinery manager, Mr. Havers, who was not a member of the board, expressed concern to the board's general manager about the Bill, confining his complaint to the payment of fees. The board's general manager suggested to him that he should wait to see how in practice the board might wish to exercise the powers conferred by Parliament, or, if he were not content to do that, to write to the chairman of the board on whose original initiative the Bill was being promoted. He chose not to adopt either suggestion at that time.

However, Mr. Havers served on the advisory committee of Milford Haven, which had met on 29 October when he was present. At that meeting, when the general manager of the board explained in detail why it was proposed that there should be payment of fees, no objection was made by Mr. Havers; certainly none was recorded in the minutes. One can only assume that at that stage he was satisfied with the explanation that had been given by the general manager of the board to the advisory committee.

The first written articulation of dissent was in a letter of 3 February of this year, some days after the Bill's Second Reading had been blocked and after petitions from his own oil company and two other oil companies had been lodged against the Bill. So at no time between January 1985 and January 1986 did either of the two oil company representatives on the board make further representations to the chairman.

The petitions are all framed in identical terms, which does not show much inventiveness if nothing else, even to the extent that in paragraph 3 there is an assertion that each of the three companies is represented on the board. That is not true in the case of Amoco, there being provision in the board's constitution for no more than two oil company representatives at any one time.

As for the proposal to change the name of the board, the petitions offer no argument or appreciation of the reasons which were made clear in the discussions which led to the adoption of the proposed change of name and in which representatives of two of the petitioning oil companies took part. I do not wish to add, therefore, to what I said earlier about the reasons for the insertion of clause 2. The main thrust of the petitions is against the proposal to pay fees and much is made of cost considerations. I hope that both my hon. Friends will understand that by objecting to the Bill now they are doubling the cost of the Bill.

Sir William Clark: How is that?

Mr. Best: If the Bill is to be given a Second Reading tonight, as I hope it will be, it will go into Committee. If it is opposed, it will take much longer and, therefore, will be much more expensive than it might otherwise be.

Sir William Clark: Surely it is an extraordinary principle to advocate in the House that if two hon. Members think a Bill is wrong they should not push their objection because it might add to the cost. I must point out that I have a connection with Texaco. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) has not explained why the name should be changed from a conservancy to a harbour board. My second point is that it is creating another quango. My hon. Friend shares my views on Conservative philosophy and we are diametrically opposed to quangos.

Mr. Best: I am diametrically opposed to a useless quango, but if my hon. Friend says we are dealing here with a quango he is also saying that the Port of London authority, the Medway ports authority, Dover harbour board, Shoreham port authority, Clyde port authority, Forth ports authority, port of Tyne authority, Tees and Hartlepool port authority and Ipswich port authority are also quangos. I do not know if my hon. Friend likes travelling around the country, but if he goes to all of those and accuses them of being quangos, he will not find himself a welcome guest. I am sure he would not say that they are all quangos, because they perform a perfectly proper function in managing their ports. That is the purpose of the board as presently constituted and the port authority as it would be if the Bill reaches the statute book.

Sir William Clark: If it is now essential that we should pay these non-executive members of the Milford Haven board, why is it that up until now the board has been successful without making payments?

Mr. Best: It is largely to bring it into line with other port authorities.

Sir William Clark: It is in line.

Mr. Best: It is not in line with other port authorities, because the authorities that I have mentioned and that are now on the record all have provision for payment of their members. That is an example of setting something on the record as a matter of precedent to ensure that this port authority, if the Bill goes on to the statute book, would have the same facility as existing port authorities.

On the matter of cost, let us say, ex hypothesi, that the payment to an individual member is in the region of £1,000 a year. That is in line with the payments made by other port authorities. That would amount to £8,000 per year, because there are eight members on the board who could be eligible for payment. As my hon. Friend has pointed out, some are already earning salaries. It is reasonable to suppose that two of those would be oil company members and would either not take the fee or would have it directed to their parent companies. In that event the effective annual cost would be reduced to £6,000 at most if all of the other six members decide to accept a fee.

If the board were to conclude that the £6,000 per annum had to be found by making an increase in the conservancy due, the increase required would be approximately 0·6 per cent. on the current level of basic due. That stands at 3·6p per gross registered tonne and is beyond doubt one of the lowest conservancy charges of any major oil port in Great Britain. An increase of 0·6 per cent. would raise the due from 3·6p to 3·62p. That represents an addition of one fiftieth of one penny. I hope that neither of my hon. Friends would wish to argue that that will be a crippling burden on the oil companies. If they do argue that, then I suspect they will not carry the House with them.

Sir William Clark: I am sure my hon. Friend is right in that point, but if it said in the Bill that the payment is restricted to £1,000 at today's figures, a lot of the opposition would fall.

Mr. Best: My hon. Friend may serve on the Committee dealing with this Bill. I hope he will take the point that the matter he has just raised is one for Committee and not for Second Reading. By virtue of what he has just said and the way he has put it, he has generously conceded that there should be payment but that there should be a limit on payment, in which case I look forward to supporting the Bill. I hope that he will be able to serve on the Committee and move an amendment that there should be a ceiling on the amount of payment. I do not know and I cannot speculate, but that might even find favour without going to a Division, particularly if that suggestion were addressed to certain members of the board.

I understand that some port authorities make provision for a maximum payment to local authority members so that they do not receive remuneration in excess of what they might otherwise receive by way of attendance allowance at a local authority meeting. These are matters for the Committee, not Second Reading.

I hope that the House will give the Bill a Second Reading. It is a modest, important and necessary Bill. I hope that, in those circumstances, my hon. Friends will accept what I have said and will support me in the Lobby.

9.29 pm

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): I shall first make clear my interest in this matter. I have no financial interest to declare. I am not paid or retained in any way by any party to this matter. When I first became a Member, I took an interest in energy matters because of the great importance of energy costs to consumers, especially industrial consumers, in my constituency. I have retained that interest, which is uppermost in my mind when talking about the Bill. I make no secret of the fact that my concern about the oil industry and the costs affecting that industry, which has been through a boom period but is now in some difficulty, is known to the oil companies, especially Gulf and Chevron. They have been in contact with me about the Bill, and I would not seek to hide that fact.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) made a good speech, but I am sorry that it was wasted on such a trifling issue. There is not much doubt that the Bill has little substance. There is no need for it to be before the House. This issue need not have troubled us. The Bill seeks to change the name of the Milford Haven Conservancy Board to the Milford Haven Port Authority and to provide for payments to be made to board members, and that is all. The change of name is of small consequence, but the matter of payment is one of principle. Despite that, I suggest that such a principle is not a suitable subject for this procedure and that it could have been handled in another way, if required. It is not required. In the context of the position at Milford Haven and the oil industry, it would be the wrong thing at the wrong time. The Bill does not deserve a Second Reading.

I shall deal first with context. The port of Milford Haven is located at the south-western tip of Wales, surrounded by a coastline of outstanding beauty. The harbour waterway, which extends 15 miles inland, is ideally suited to sailing boats and similar pleasure craft. There are up to 1,000 sailing boats — ranging from dinghies to large ocean-going yachts — in the haven at any one time. Generally, the oil companies and the yachting fraternity live happily side by side.

Historically, Milford Haven has had strong connections with the Royal Navy and the fishing industry. After the second world war, the naval presence was steadily reduced to the present armaments storage depot and underwater recovery facility. During the same post-war period, the size of the fleet fishing from Milford Haven declined as Irish sea and other local fish stocks were depleted. But the port's location placed it at a disadvantage with regard to the long call fishing grounds around Iceland. However, such disadvantage as the port suffered in relation to fishing proved to be no disadvantage in relation to the oil industry.

The sheltered deep-water harbour and the port's good weather record proved to be attractive to the rapidly expanding oil importing and refining industry of the late 1950s and 1960s. Around 1960, BP constructed an ocean terminal on the south side of the waterway where crude oil, pumped in ever larger tankers, was off-loaded and pumped to the Llandarcy refinery some 70 miles away between Port Talbot and Swansea. Esso and Texaco followed closely and constructed oil refineries on the north and south shores respectively. Shipping activities increased significantly as crude oil was delivered and a high proportion of products were moved by sea to the consumer. Gulf and Amoco followed. Massive investment was put into Milford Haven. Government grants, especially regional development grants, proved to be an incentive.

The immediate availability of a number of separate supplies of the then cheap fuel oil encouraged the Central Electricity Generating Board to construct the largest and the last oil-fired power station — the Pembroke power station — on the south side of the haven. The station is supplied by pipeline from the refineries. By 1976 the port supplied approximately 25 million tonnes — almost 25 per cent. of the United Kingdom's oil refining capacity — and 20 million tonnes of that capacity was located on the shores of the haven.

[Mr. Alistair Burt]

The House knows the problems resulting from the OPEC instigated price increases of 1973 and 1976. They triggered a series of events that have had a profound effect on the oil industry worldwide and, significantly and crucially, on the port of Milford Haven. The large increase in oil-based fuel prices depressed consumption, because of price, the switch to cheaper fuels, energy conservation and improved efficiency of use. By 1980 the European oil industry had almost 40 per cent. overcapacity. That problem affected all the oil companies that use Milford Haven today. The continued operation of the marginal refineries resulted in petroleum product volumes exceeding demand with a consequent reduction in product prices and refinery margins. Oil refining, especially at the less sophisticated and less efficient sites, became unprofitable. In the latter case it became highly unprofitable. As a consequence, the industry shut down the simple refineries and concentrated operations at the more sophisticated and lower cost locations.

In the late 1970s the industry recognised the need to construct more sophisticated plant, which would produce more higher value products at the expense of low value products. The construction programme of those fluid catalytic crackers and, to a lesser extent, hydro-crackers and vis breakers was accelerated. Construction was concentrated at each company's best location. Texaco and Gulf and, separately, Amoco and its new partner, Murco, constructed two FCCs and associated plants at Milford Haven. However, the industry was changing and Milford Haven, through no fault of its own, began to feel chill winds.

In 1983 Esso announced the closure of the Milford Haven refinery, which was followed in 1985 by BP's decision to rationalise its operation at Llandarcy, which resulted in the closure of the oil terminal at Milford Haven. The total refining capacity at Milford Haven had now been reduced to approximately 15 million tonnes per annum. Average throughput in the next year or two will probably be limited to about 12 million to 13 million tonnes. As I said earlier, that is almost half what it was 10 years ago, which is a significant decline.

The recent fall in crude oil prices from about 28 dollars to 16 dollars a barrel has disrupted the industry. To say the least, the future is uncertain. In the long term, low oil prices should benefit industry in general. However, the switch to higher demand will take several years. While that process is continuing the capacity at places like Milford Haven will decline and the port will be in some difficulty. The need to watch costs will become paramount. That uncertainty makes the board's move to pay expenses to board members inexplicable to the oil companies.

Has the relationship between the Milford Haven Conservancy Board and the oil companies always been bad? Has their relationship always ended up being debated in a contested private Bill of small consequence? The relationship between the board and the oil companies has not been all that bad. As the port grew in the 1950s and 1960s, it was obvious that an authority was needed. The conservancy board fitted the needs of the port and the oil companies, and it has worked closely with the major oil companies.

The board's composition has reflected the variety of interests that it serves in the area. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn has referred to the composition of the board, which is set out in schedule 1 to the Milford Haven Conservancy Act 1983. The oil companies nominate two members and Trinity House nominates one. There is one union representative, one representative of shipping agents and brokers, and two local authority representatives. The harbour master and the general manager serve as of right. There is a chairman, a vice-chairman and a representative of some body concerned with the environment. Therefore, there are 12 members, of which the oil companies have only two.

All but the representative of the environmental body are or could be remunerated in some form, not through the oil companies, but through their everyday work. They accept membership of the board as a duty which they cheerfully perform. My hon. Friend never said that the board was short of members, or that there was great pressure from any existing members for payment.

Mr. Best: I am sorry to say that my hon. Friend is factually incorrect. How can he tell the House that members who are appointed by the Secretary of State, after consultation with two district councils and a county council, must necessarily receive remuneration from elsewhere? The present membership is self-employed and is not necessarily receiving remuneration from another body.

I listened with interest to my hon. Friend's paean of praise and his newfound enthusiasm for Wales. I am not sure how he squares it with his statement on 12 February when he intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). The hon. Lady said that no mention had been made of Wales, and he said:

"It was not worth mentioning." — [*Official Report*, 12 February 1986; Vol 91, c. 1020.]

Is my hon. Friend trying to filibuster and talk the Bill out? So far, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Sir W. Clark) has twice told him to slow down, and has passed him a note.

Mr. Burt: If my hon. Friend wants to give me a demonstration of filibustering, he has just done so. He spoke for a considerable time about a small Bill and left many points which need to be cleared up. *[Interruption.]* I accept that he was generous in allowing interventions, but he will appreciate that there are many points to be considered and that I have made all my remarks relevant.

The only irrelevance during the past few minutes has come from my hon. Friend. He rightly referred to a remark I made in a debate last week. The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) had been describing a remarkable character who lived in the last century called Mr. Smith O'Brien, who apparently thought so little of anywhere but Ireland, a constituency of which he represented, that he did not participate in English or Scottish affairs. The hon. Lady, in an aside, said that he made no mention of Wales, and I remarked that Wales was not worth mentioning. Indeed, at the time of Mr. Smith O'Brien, Wales was not worth a mention because he did not give it one. It is to the credit of the hon. Lady and others who have represented Wales since then that it is now impossible to disregard Wales. I have spent many happy holidays in Wales and there is no suggestion that the feelings of Mr. Smith O'Brien are my feelings. I am pleased that my hon. Friend has allowed me to correct that misunderstanding and misapprehension. The hon. Lady, to whom I spoke afterwards, took the whole matter as a joke. She

appreciated my apology. The sense of humour of the hon. Lady and of the people of Wales will now be satisfied by my explanation. Whatever Mr. Smith O'Brien may have thought of Wales, I have nothing but the greatest admiration and respect for it. My forebears are Celtic, so I have a close affinity with that great Principality.

I take my hon. Friend's point seriously regarding the members appointed by the Secretary of State in consultation with the local authorities. I fully accept that if they are not remunerated, my earlier words do not stand true, and I withdraw them.

Most of the members of that board receive money from their general occupations and they serve on the board as a matter of duty. I refer to a matter which my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn failed to mention in his speech: that the board members were clamouring for payment and there was a dearth of people waiting to serve on the board, so there was a strong case for change.

We in the Conservative party are supposed to leave matters alone unless a problem should occur. Change for the sake of change is not necessarily the best maxim for the Conservative party. Yet the tenor of the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn was that we should have change for the sake of change. He could suggest no benefits that would accrue from the change he proposed.

I believe that the relationship between the board and the oil companies is good. The board performs the usual functions of a port authority. My hon. Friend made the point that he seeks only, in some way, to make the board's power equal to that of other port authorities around the country. However, the Bill does not seek any major powers. The conservancy board at Milford Haven already provides for and maintains safe navigation in the harbour. It controls the construction and operation of marine facilities and identifies and designates safe moorings. It ensures that the harbour is operated in a safe and effective manner. There is nothing of substance in the Bill to affect the serious matters that relate to harbours. There are just two small inconsequential points.

I maintain that that fact alone has prompted the greatest concern amongst the oil companies. There is no suggestion that the Bill seeks major powers. The board already performs the functions that all port authorities perform and, by and large, the board does that well. That is one of the reasons why the oil companies and the board have had such a good relationship for so long.

The board's facilities have expanded to meet the needs of a new authority. Additions have been made to staff and equipment as the port's activity has increased. A purpose built administration building and control centre was completed in 1964. The board has a good record of steadily increasing the channel size, in navigation aids and the design and economy of launches leading to the current replacement of the harbour radar surveillance by a more powerful and highly sophisticated system.

The record of the Milford Haven Conservancy Board on oil pollution prevention is highly commendable with its system of committees and working groups manned by oil company and board staff, usually led by the harbour master. The harbour has developed effective operating procedures for the prevention of and cleaning up of such pollution. In general terms, the relationship between the board, particularly its operating staff, and the oil companies is at a very high level. I am sure that the oil companies would wish me to pay tribute to the good work that has been done by the conservancy board and its staff over many years.

The competent professionalism of the board's officers and staff is highly regarded. They, in turn, are aware of the oil companies' environment and the pressures upon them and generally react in an understanding manner.

If everything is working so well, as generally it is, why is there need for change? My hon. Friend the hon. Member for Ynys Môn said that the changes would bring the board into line with others. I would like to know what the benefits would be. I can see the two changes outlined in the Bill, but my hon. Friend has not suggested how the consumers, the people who use the Milford Haven port authority, would benefit from the changes. My hon. Friend has not made the case for benefit, so I believe that the need for the Bill has not been made. There has been no desire for payment from board members. Again, I stress that my hon. Friend did not suggest that the board is short of members. So why is there a need for change?

Mr. Best: The benefit would come in the same way as my hon. Friend and I receive a parliamentary salary. It would mean that nobody need feel inhibited in serving on a port authority as a result of financial impecuniosity.

Mr. Burt: I accept the point, but I challenge my hon. Friend to say whether he has any evidence to show that anyone of whom he can think has been inhibited from serving on the board due to lack of remuneration. My hon. Friend remains in his place.

I shall deal with some of the financial aspects which are crucially important to the oil companies. In 1969, a major dredging scheme was undertaken. At that time, the board had no cash reserves, but it had an overdraft. The Treasury said that as a condition of the loan the board should aim to make a profit sufficient to build up over the years a cash reserve of £500,000. The dates are significant. In 1969, the board had no cash reserves. The reserves have been increased over the years and now stand at just below £3 million, compared with an inflation rate target of £2·7 million. The excess will be consumed in paying for the new radar surveillance system in 1986. The cash reserves have been invested successfully over the years. The dividend and the yield form part of the board's income and capital growth helps to protect and increase the cash reserves.

When determining harbour dues, the board balances its effective income from harbour dues, based on the oil companies' estimates of future traffic, from investments and major project income against operating capital expenses. A net margin is targeted, first, to inflation-proof reserves and, secondly, to obtain a return of 10 per cent. on capital employed.

In 1975, the National Ports Council, with the approval of the Labour Government, recommended that port authorities should aim to receive a return on capital employed of not less than 10 per cent. That latter target has plainly rankled in latter years when oil companies have been losing money.

From an early stage, the conservancy board provided transport for harbour pilots to and from vessels in the harbour. The cost of those services is recovered from the pilotage authority. The board has no control over the pilots or the pilotage authority other than through representation on the management committee and good working relationships.

[Mr. Burt]

In 1970, the board supervised a large dredging project to allow the safe passage of larger ships in and out of the harbour. The £6·4 million expenditure was funded through the conservancy board by a loan and grant under sections 11 and 12 of the Harbours Act 1964. The beneficiary companies, initially Esso, BP and Texaco, are effectively repaying that loan over 25 years. Esso and BP are obliged to maintain repayments until the loan is discharged, on a ship or pay basis.

In 1978, and after much activity by the board, the British, Irish and Steam Packet Company effectively contracted the Milford Haven Conservancy Board to construct a roll-on/roll-off terminal at Pembroke dock for a newly established Pembroke dock to Rosslare passenger service. B and I in turn contracted repayment of that loan, plus a suitable profit element. The outstanding loan is about £9 million. B and I pays port dues on appropriate shipping movements in addition to those charges.

Those large financial transactions appear to have whetted the board's entrepreneurial appetite. It acquired two private companies operating within the port—the Marine and Port Services Company, a small boat repair and construction company to which my hon. Friend has referred, and D. V. Howells, which is also a small boat construction and repair company.

The board provides accountancy services to those two subsidiaries. The purchase and continued operation of those two companies has been a bone of contention between the oil companies and the board from the outset. The acquisition of the subsidiaries was not seen to be consistent with the board's functions. In addition, the board has resisted fallback suggestions made a number of times to integrate the two operations in favour of cost savings.

The board's operating revenue is obtained from port dues, capital project income, pilotage charges and investment income. In excess of 95 per cent. of the port dues will fall on the remaining oil companies—Amoco, Gulf and Texaco—in the future.

Bearing in mind the port authority's financial problems, the decline in traffic and the fact that BP and Esso have gone and the large part played by the oil companies in its finances—95 per cent. of all port dues—and the consequential need for great confidence between the board and the companies, the Bill's timing is wrong.

At a time when costs need to be reduced to as low as possible—that affects many industries other than the oil industry—and when the board needs to be seen to be doing as much as possible to help, it comes along with this proposal, and the Bill, to increase expense, no matter that it is by a small amount. It is sending out the wrong signals at the wrong time. Bearing in mind the good relationship over the years between the oil companies and the conservancy board, this seems a great shame. I am sure my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn would agree.

Mr. Best: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He has not maintained, as I mentioned earlier, that ex hypothesis there might be a net increase of £6,000 to discharge payments of dues. Does he accept that if that is right, the extra revenue would involve an increased charge per gallon of ·000001p? Is he seriously telling the House that will cripple the oil companies?

Mr. Burt: No, of course not. My hon. Friend persists in missing the point of principle in referring to the figures. I do not quarrel with those figures. Can my hon. Friend point to anything in the Bill which fixes the costs at the levels which he has just mentioned? Once again my hon. Friend remains seated. It is a point of principle. There is no guarantee that the costs which he has mentioned will come to pass. In all common sense, the costs will be in that region, but no one knows that and it does not say so in the Bill. It is the point of principle that has concerned the oil companies. In a time of great financial stringency, when the oil companies have to cut back—indeed, some oil companies have had to leave Milford Haven—the oil companies now see a couple of extravagances coming from their boards—the promotion of the Bill and the suggestion of expenses being paid.

If my hon. Friend and those who promote the Bill had put forward the need for the changes and the need for expenses to be paid then there would have been more sympathy. That has not been done. There is a bone of contention over the period of time which has elapsed since this matter first arose between the oil companies and the conservancy board through discussions that took place at board level.

The proposals to change the conservancy board's title and to pay fees to ordinary board members was raised at the January 1985 meeting. I have a copy of the appropriate minutes—despite what my hon. Friend has suggested. The Gulf representative disputed the need to pay fees on the basis that all members were already salaried by interested organisations. It was pointed out that those circumstances may not always apply and that one member was in that category. The resolution was carried. My hon. Friend has asked why more protest was not made. I have already explained that the composition of the board is 12 members, and the oil companies hold two posts. There is no point in fighting again and again for a vote which always goes the same way. My hon. Friend will see that the minutes for the January meeting clearly state:

"Some members did not feel that payment of a fee to ordinary board members as well as their expenses was altogether appropriate in the circumstances of the Milford Haven Conservancy Board."

The objection of the oil companies was clearly stated—their dissent was marked. There was no point in forcing a matter to the vote time and again when the odds were so stacked. The oil companies had no wish to pursue the matter in that manner.

At a later meeting the Gulf representative asked for the inclusion of clauses to allow payment of fees to be made to members' employers in the event that fee payments were made. This is also a matter to which my hon. Friend has made reference. The reason was that the oil company members who serve on the board had no wish to profit themselves through such fees. It was a straightforward matter for them to direct the payment of those fees to their companies.

Mr. Best: An acceptance of the principle.

Mr. Burt: No, there was no acceptance of the principle. The oil company representatives in a minority, with no constitutional power to block the motion, were anxious not to be seen to profit by it. They were thus seeking to fund the money back through their companies. In the circumstances, that was an honourable thing to do. The suggestions to the contrary by my hon. Friend are completely rejected.

In April 1985 consultants were appointed to review B and I's lack of profitability with a view to rationalising the business. Since that time, the oil companies' representatives on the conservancy board have been seeking to suggest stringent economies, but they have not been forthcoming.

The Bill has proceeded, but the oil companies have made their opposition clear from the start, and suggested that the Bill was unnecessary and of no benefit to them or anybody who used Milford Haven. Alas, the Bill has still come to the House. I am sure that it is with the great regret of all that the matter has come this far, but there is no doubt that the matters that have so concerned the oil companies have been matters of principle and should, if the Bill is to proceed in this way——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Thursday 20 February.

Representation of the People

10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): I beg to move,

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.

Articles 2 to 4 of the draft order increase the present limits on candidates' expenses at parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom and local government elections in Great Britain in line with changes in the value of money. Article 5 provides for a similar increase in the case of candidates' expenses at ward elections in the City of London. If the draft is approved by both House, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make an order as soon as possible thereafter in time for this year's local government elections on 8 May.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Are we to be together again?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman and I have been together for so many days that we should get this one over as quickly as possible.

Article 1 provides for the order to come into operation on the day after the day on which it is made. It will then enable candidates who are in the middle of an election campaign to incur expenses to the new limit permitted by the order. It will not, however, validate expenses in excess of the present limits which have been incurred before it takes effect.

The current limits for parliamentary and local government elections prescribed by section 76(2) of the Representation of the People Act 1983—excluding those for GLC and ILEA elections—were originally fixed by order in March 1982. So too were the limits for ward elections in the City of London prescribed by section 197(1) of that Act. By the end of August 1985, however, the retail price index has risen by 20·2 per cent. My right hon. Friend accordingly decided to increase those limits by a similar amount under sections 76A and 197(3) of the 1983 Act. Those provisions enable him to vary such limits by means of an order subject to the affirmative resolution of both Houses of Parliament, but only to take account of changes in the value in money since they were fixed.

All the major political parties and local authority associations in Great Britain were consulted about the proposed increases and raised no objection to them, although one of those consulted asked whether it would be possible for the figures to be rounded up or down to become more easily committed to memory — for example, by changing the rate for parliamentary elections in county constituencies from £3,240 plus 3·7p per elector to £3,500 plus 3·5p per elector. However, sadly, such rounding is outside the scope of the order-making power, and the present figures do not seem to have caused returning officers and election agents any insurmountable difficulty.

The making of an order at this time will enable all the candidates at this year's local government elections in Great Britain to fight a more effective campaign. As for the effect of the order on parliamentary by-elections, I can best illustrate this by telling the House that the present limits in county and borough constituencies of 60,000 electors will be increased from £4,560 and £4,080 to

[Mr. Mellor]

£5,460 and £4,920 respectively. This does not, however, preclude a further increase before the next general election. I hope, therefore that the House will give this measure its full support.

10.3 pm

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): The Minister will be relieved to know that I should like to get this 48-hour love-in over as soon as possible. Like other hon. Members, we were both here late last night and early this morning.

The Opposition welcome this measure. I have just one thought to leave with the Minister on a point which I understand is not covered by the order. Perhaps he could take on board the thought that the House should attend to some control of the national expenditure by political parties at elections. We limit that in terms of candidates, and yet we leave open ended the matter of national advertising campaigns of political parties. That cannot make any sense. Although I understand that the order does not deal with that, I hope that we shall bring our minds to bear on it.

10.5 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I am encouraged to follow the point made by the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) because it touches closely on a matter which has been in my mind. I support the order, but it seems rather strange that in 1986 we continue to behave as if the methodology of communication with the electorate at election time is the same as it was 50 years ago. As the hon. Member for Erdington said, that emphasises the effect of the national control of elections rather than the ability of the local candidate to communicate with his electorate.

We live in the television age and it is through that medium that national policy and national figures can impinge upon local electors. By such an order local candidates are prevented from having their fair share of the argument. After all, the figure that is available for expenditure by a candidate in any election, if divided by the number of electors, would not cover the cost of a first class stamp if the candidate wished to send something other than a freepost missive to his electors. It would not cover the cost of a telephone call of substantial duration to any of his electors and it barely covers the cost of printing an electoral address which he may wish to send to his electors.

We seem to be dealing with the philosophy of large public meetings and small electorates when the candidate was able to reach his electorate much more easily than is now the case because, now the people have television to watch, a candidate can hardly maintain an audience of more than a few hundred at any meeting in his constituency during an election campaign.

I hope that, as the years go by, we shall consider the philosophy that lies behind orders such as this one. I am not making a personal plea. I spent less than the other candidates in the election which brought me to the House. I am not making a plea for expenditure of United States proportions because they go too far, but I am arguing for a revision of the philosophy which seems to put all the emphasis on national elections and far too little on local elections.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 14th January, be approved.

British Leyland

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

10.7 pm

Mr. David Gilroy Bevan (Birmingham, Yardley): I am obliged that I have been fortunate enough to be able to have an Adjournment debate on one of the most vital industries in the heartland of Britain, in Birmingham. So far, there has been no debate on the machinations that have affected the car factory near my constituency. I make a declaration of interest in PPG Industries, but I am nevertheless more concerned to make a declaration of interest on behalf of the numerous members of my constituency who work either in Freight Rover or in Range Rover. Probably over 60 per cent. of the work force actually resides in Yardley.

I shall briefly refer to the construction of the Land Rover Leyland Group. It comprises Leyland Vehicles Limited, Land Rover Group and LRIH which is a company dealing with international matters. Land Rover Group includes Land Rover and Freight Rover. I am not concerned about Leyland Vehicles, the heavy group. The truck division is reputed to have accumulated losses of £500 million. However, it is worth noting that General Motors may not just be interested in Land Rover, Range Rover and Freight Rover as sweeteners. However, it may be interested in the truck division so that it can get its hands on Scammell, which is a subsidiary of Leyland Truck.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Will my hon. Friend accept that in Leyland Truck as well as in Leyland Bus uncertainty and lack of information is causing most of the aggravation to the work force?

Mr. Bevan: I agree. I shall deal later with the bus division.

Through its Scammell subsidiary, the truck division is one of the two companies that has put in tenders for the £120 million defence order that is shortly to be issued by the Ministry of Defence for rapid fire rocket launchers, which will be able to serve up at a collossal rate of fire power the ammunition needed for those fire launchers. That might be the entrée for General Motors, which is an excellent American company. That might be the real reason why General Motors is trying to get the 1 billion dollar order that may be forthcoming from the Pentagon for similar rocket launchers at a later date. If that is its strategy, it means that it is not intent upon obtaining Land Rover as a sweetener. If that is its intent, we must look at it again.

There are 8,500 people involved in Land Rover, the majority of whom are from Yardley. There are 1,700 people at Freight Rover. The Land Rover factories—14 throughout the United Kingdom—were located as far away as Cardiff. They are now centred upon Lode Lane, Solihull, a few hundred yards over the boundary. All that they have bequeathed to Yardley, Acocks Green and Tyseley are eight empty, old factories.

I do not object to that move, because it did not adversely affect the employment of my constituents. However, their future needs to be assured. Their concern has been expressed to me during the several visits that I have made to factories in the area, on tours in the area and by letters. Their concern is not merely for themselves. They want to continue to work for what they consider to be a unique British manufacturing company in the case of Land Rover and Range Rover.

The only active factory that is left in Yardley—those eight plants having been bequeathed to the Lode Lane complex where they are rationalised into one unit and are able to compete and take orders from the rest of the world—is BL Technology. It is worth looking at Freight Rover. It is located in Common Lane. Again, that is not in my constituency but the constituency of the of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis). It is interdependent, Land Rover supplies the engines and the gear boxes: the 3·5, the two litre diesel and the 77 mm gearboxes. Freight Rover supplies Land Rover with the pressings, which is another interdependency. Austin Rover supplies the engines and the axles. Perkins now supplies a diesel engine. There is, therefore, an interdependency in the estalishments.

It is not true to say that there is vast overproduction in the Land Rover and Range Rover side of the business. There is none. Not a single vehicle is kept in stock. Every vehicle that is made by Range Rover and Land Rover is sold, so there is no stock piling. In the rapid growth market to which I refer, which is the four wheel drive market throughout the world, we must note with apprehension that General Motors, which has a shopping list at its disposal and which is reputed to have some £5·77 billion to spend in buying companies, and only a fortnight ago bought the "Lotus" company, also owns 35 per cent. of Isuzu, a four-wheel drive light truck manufacturing business which has doubled its turnover in the last year, and is selling well. Freight Rover with its particular vehicle, the Sherpa, has 13·9 per cent. of the market, a sizeable percentage and far bigger than the figure to which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister referred on television last night of 4 per cent. for the whole industry in Europe.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): In the context of the Prime Minister's interview last night, in which she referred to the virtue of wider share ownership, does my hon. Friend not consider that, with its recovery plan well advanced, floating Land Rover on a management buy-out with employee participation might even now represent an opportunity to achieve wider share ownership?

Mr. Bevan: Indeed, I welcome it. I would have thought that my hon. Friend has seen a paragraph which I intended saying later in my speech. His pre-emption, however, is welcome. Of course I consider that that would be a reasonable option, and one which is after all encouraged in almost every theatre of operations.

In regard to the shipyards which will be privatised later this year, if that is the option chosen, in regard to its operations it will consider a management buy-out with management, the work force and the investors all comprising part of such a buy-out.

What I object to—I do this as an erstwhile surveyor and one who carried out many estate deals prior to my coming to this place, with many qualifications, dare I say, for doing so—is what I consider to be quite the wrong way of negotiating the sale of this or any other business is to do it in secrecy, to do it behind closed doors and to do it with merely one other customer in pre-determined mind. That is no way to create a deal, that is no way to excite the best figure from the market. It is so extraordinary that, following the leak of this particular

[Mr. Bevan]

matter, the tree is being shaken and down from the branches of that tree come purchasers, and every day that continues like falling leaves on the industrial greensward below.

More and more we are told that Lonrho is now interested. We are told that Aveling Barford is interested, a previous subsidiary of BL. We are told tonight that three other firms are interested, although I do not know which firms they are. But the more we know about the matter, the more interest there will be. It would be wrong to announce at this stage, having treated in secret with a predetermined purchaser, that the omelette must be served up by Easter. A very addled egg will be delivered if this time limit is put upon it.

We must ask—why all the rush? We have invested £2 billion in the company, as the Government are always kind enough to remind us. The Government have no money. They have only the people's money and, therefore, they have invested taxpayers' money in this ingredient and act as trustees. They must get a decent yield from that investment. The Government are not considering, are they, taking back any portion of the £1·6 billion that they have invested in the form of guarantees, letters of credit or the agreements that have been mentioned? There is no suspicion of that. Therefore, normally one would have asked that time be allowed for the reformation and rationalisation of Land Rover so that it can produce its supurb new models—the 90 and 110 versions of the Land Rover and the Vogue version of the Range Rover, which goes faster, which has a fifth gear, and which is an excellent vehicle for the markets of north America. I understand that an organisation of about 60 distributing agents is about to be appointed. Since there cannot now be time for that to happen, let us privatise if we must, but let us privatise to the best British buyer, in which the people can take a shareholding.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): My hon. Friend has explained why General Motors would be interested in Land Rover and Range Rover, but why on earth is it interested in Freight Rover? That company shares a factory with Austin Rover, obtains its components from Austin Rover, sells its products to Austin Rover, and produces a range identical to that produce by General Motors. Could it be that General Motors wishes to buy it simply to close it down?

Mr. Bevan: That is the fear of my constituents.

Yesterday, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) said that the people of Luton would be happy to see such an arrangement between General Motors and British Leyland. That is precisely why the people of Birmingham are unhappy. They want the British flag to continue flying over their enterprise. They know that Bedford Trucks is about to announce a loss of about £120 million. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) said, the ranges are identical. The people of Birmingham foresee possible doom and eclipse if the matter continues.

The bus business is different. In a previous existence, as chairman of the West Midlands passenger transport authority, I ordered buses from British Leyland and Metro Cammell at £7 million a time, but that is no longer possible. The grant has gone, and there has been privatisation and all sorts of things, including delicensing, have taken place. I would be happy for the bus division to go to Laird where there is a natural home of it at Metro Cammell, but not this.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bevan: I am afraid that I must deny the hon. Gentleman an intervention.

Land Rovers and Range Rovers are individually crafted as no other vehicle is. We know that 70 per cent. of models produced are exported. There was a 40 per cent. increase last year in exports to Switzerland and a 10 per. cent. increase to Europe. The vehicle, with its immense potential, is about to be sold off in a shotgun wedding as a bartered bride. We ask that the marriage banns be given time to be read properly so that the names of the suitors can be understood, and that our belief in the factory be allowed to continue with the British flag above it and not struck, as the flag over Fort Dunlop has been, and not even as the flag over Westland has been.

10.24 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I am more grateful than usual that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Mr. Bevan) has had the opportunity to discuss the future of Range Rover, Freight Rover, and Land Rover. I gather that there was a little local difficulty earlier today about possible developments on the future of British Leyland as a whole.

We have had a very busy day in the Department of Trade and Industry. We have had a lot of discussions about the future of BL. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) will remember, we had earlier today a delegation composed of trade unionists from Range Rover and Land Rover, and members of the local council. We discussed the future of Range Rover and Land Rover at great length. Despite the fact that we have had a busy day discussing the future of BL, since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a statement yesterday afternoon in answer to a private notice question, there have been no new developments.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley. I am aware that the future of Land Rover (UK) has been argued and discussed in the west midlands and the country as a whole. It has been discussed publicly and privately, with conviction and cogently. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) said, the present uncertainty is bound to be a worry. I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Yardley in that I do not think that it would be sensible for that uncertainty to go on and on. Keeping the future shrouded in mist would cause serious anxieties among employees and be bad for the future of the businesses.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): We are all sympathic about the busy day that my hon. Friend has had. Will he forgive me if I say that we are even more sympathetic about the busy days that lie ahead of him? Before he concludes those busy days, will he give the House one pledge, that before he closes the chapter on this lamentable affair, before he agrees on what will happen to Land Rover and British trucks, and before any agreement is signed the House will, bearing in mind the importance of the issue, debate it before ink is put to paper? That would satisfy many of us, and we would go to bed happy after our busy day as well.

Mr. Morrison: I know that my hon. Friend is a very busy man. We have known each other for 20 years. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it quite clear that, when any announcement of anything concrete is to be made, it will be made to the House and it will be debated. I quite appreciate what my hon. Friend has just said.

Mr. Terry Davis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Bevan: May we therefore discount the statement that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made yesterday in the House that he would inform the House when negotiations had been concluded? That is not enough, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) has pointed out.

Mr. Morrison: My hon. Friend will appreciate that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is not using the House as a negotiating House. Obviously negotiations will take place with all the separate parties, whether GM or other parties. When a conclusion to negotiations is reached my right hon. Friend will immediately make a statement to the House and he will accept that it will be for the House to debate and decide upon the result of those negotiations.

Mr. Terry Davis: We are dealing with a serious point. What is of concern to hon. Members on both sides is that there should be a debate in the House after negotiations have been concluded but before anything is signed, sealed and sold off. We are anxious not just to know the result of negotiations but to have an opportunity to debate the result before the matter is finally signed. The hon. Gentleman should go a little further—as his right hon. Friend did not do yesterday — and give us that assurance.

I should like two other assurances. *[Interruption.]* These are important matters for my constituents who work at Freight Rover. Will the Minister follow up the assurances given yesterday by his right hon. Friend about consulting the people who work at Land Rover and Freight Rover and give us an assurance tonight that they will be consulted before anything is signed, sealed and delivered so that the House may debate the issue in the knowledge of what the people who work in the companies want?

Will he also make sure that in the negotiations a legally enforceable undertaking is sought that production of Sherpa vans will not be removed from Washwood Heath and production of Land Rovers will not be transferred from Solihull to Spain?

Mr. Morrison: On the first point, the hon. Gentleman and I came to the House on the same day and I have always understood that the House was sovereign; the House has total and complete control over what happens. If the House decides to go in a particular direction, that is the decision of the House.

On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I understand from his constituency point of view why he raises it, but it would be totally misleading of me to make any predictions about what may happen because at this stage I do not know what deal there may be with whom, albeit I have accepted that the deal with General Motors is further down the course than the others. In those circumstances, he will understand that I cannot commit myself. I understand the crucial and important point that he has made on behalf of his constituents.

In the few seconds which are left, may I talk about the future of Land Rover, Range Rover and Freight Rover? Of course, they are all crucially important, but my right hon. Friend and I have to consider them in the context of the vehicle industry as a whole. Land Rover, Range Rover and Freight Rover comprise one of the many jewels in the crown of the west midlands. But I hope that the House will appreciate that tens of thousands of jobs are dependent upon foreign car manufacturers. Ford, General Motors and other car manufacturers are established vehicle manufacturers in this country. To a great extent, in some cases to a major extent, they source from United Kingdom component suppliers.

My hon. Friends from the west midlands should remember that in west midlands terms it is dangerous industrially and politically to appear to be anti-American. If we appear to be anti-American the business and jobs that come with American investment may be driven away. *[Interruption.]* The shadow Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), knows perfectly well that there is a substantial number of jobs in the Scottish economy thanks to American investment, as is the case in other parts of the United Kingdom.

I hope that all hon. Members agree that the Government's policy must be directed towards a competitive United Kingdom based commercial vehicle industry. We have to decide on the future not just of Land Rover and Range Rover, but of Freight Rover, Leyland Trucks and Leyland Bus. My hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble knows Leyland Bus very well. That company is not part of any potential deal with General Motors and can be set aside for the purposes of this debate. Nevertheless, it is crucial that solutions are found for the bus industry, too, and those solutions will not be easy to find.

I think it is accepted that there is over-capacity in the truck industry, and some people say that in Europe that over-capacity is 40 per cent. For that reason, if we are to maintain a competitive truck manufacturing industry, we cannot stay precisely where we are. We have to ensure that the truck industry becomes more efficient to meet the demands of the market place. If it does not become more efficient, we have to accept the fact that it could disappear.

My hon. Friend the Member for Yardley raised, as he did last night when he came to see me, the defence implications. I assured him last night that we are satisfied about that. I accept that Freight Rover has been successful over the past few years, and that has been due to the good work of the management and the work force. The problem with the van industry is not dissimilar, and if we did not look properly at the problem we would be courting potential disaster for the whole of the industry in the United Kingdom.

I accept entirely the points made by my hon. Friend about Freight Rover. I hope that he will accept that it is right to look at the industry as a whole. Strong arguments were advanced in favour of retaining Land Rover, Range Rover as an independent United Kingdom company. My hon. Friend the Member for Yardley and several of my hon. Friends have made that point. Management buy-out is talked about. I understand that. I was brought up in the back of a Land Rover, and as the youngest son I still sit in the back of a Land Rover, so I know about the Union

[Mr. Morrison]

Jack flying over Land Rover. But we have to look at the long-term future, and I would like my sons and grandsons also to be brought up in the back of a Land Rover. The important——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-three minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 19 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

PETERHEAD HARBOURS (SOUTH BAY DEVELOPMENT) ORDER CONFIRMATION BILL

Read the Third time, and passed.

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Simplified Planning Zones

1. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, under the proposals for creating simplified planning zones, he will make it his policy to remove the obligation on local authorities mandatorily to consider the creation of such zones; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): The requirement of the Housing and Planning Bill is no more than that the authority shall consider whether simplified planning zones should be established. I see no likelihood at all that local authorities, or the Secretary of State, would require such zones to be set up in areas in which they would be environmentally unsuitable.

Mr. Adley: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply, and I support his proposition of SPZs in urban areas. Is he aware that forcing local authorities which do not want to do so, to go through all the bureaucratic exercise of doing the job is not only annoying, but reinforces the views of those who are worried about the whole thrust of Government policy? Will he re-examine the Bill to see whether he can restrict the obligation to urban areas only?

Mr. Patten: We do not want to increase bureaucracy. That is not the intention of SPZs, which are meant to reduce bureaucracy. However, I fully understand my hon. Friend's point, which he has put forward strongly on behalf of his constituents. I undertake to look again in Committee at the points that he has made.

Mr. Nellist: Is not the simplification of planning zones fraught with problems, as the London Docklands Development Corporation, which is a halfway house towards simplification of planning zones, has shown over the illegality of the razor wire fence at News International's plant at Wapping? Would not the full simplification of planning zones bring about even more such abuses?

Mr. Patten: No, not at all. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome the fact that the docklands development in London has introduced more than £1 billion of capital and much needed development.

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My hon. Friend's reassuring answer will be very welcome. Are not Dorset and other areas in the south of England places where SPZs are clearly unsuitable and unwanted, and would be an environmental disaster?

Mr. Patten: I am always anxious to try to reassure the county of Dorset, and I have already given the undertaking to look in Committee at SPZs in connection with rural, urban, green belt and other areas.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister appreciate that the proposal for SPZs is causing great concern and is believed to be a way of undermining the green belt areas, the areas of outstanding natural beauty and other areas, especially as they were excluded in the consultative document but not in the Bill? Will the Minister give a categorical assurance that SPZs will not be allowed in green belt and other special areas?

Mr. Patten: I have already said that during the passage of the Bill in Committee we will conisder the point about green belt development. Will the hon. Gentleman speak to his Labour colleagues in the controlling groups on Oxford and Cambridge city councils, who want to make incursions into green belt areas, and get them to restrain themselves?

Mr. Wiggin: Does my hon. Friend accept that this concept has to be confined to urban areas, and for that matter derelict urban areas? Will he seek to delineate those areas in the Bill?

Mr. Patten: That is an interesting suggestion. One of the reasons for introducing SPZs is to do all that we can to help inner city areas, a policy which I know my hon. Friend supports. We must also look closely at the important environmental points that my hon. Friend has made.

British Nuclear Fuels

2. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings he has had with British Nuclear Fuels regarding the monitoring of waste products; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): My right hon. Friend visited Sellafield in October 1985. There has been no formal ministerial meeting with BNFL since then.

Mr. Skinner: Why does the Minister not go up to Sellafield and tell the management that the British people are fed up to the back teeth with hearing the management continually pour out lies about all the outbreaks that are taking place? There has been another outbreak in the last 24 hours, and the management has had to admit today that two workers have been slightly contaminated, which it denied yesterday. Will the Minister go up there and tell the management that there should be a proper truly independent public inquiry and that if it is found necessary to close the plant every worker will be paid for as long as the inquiry lasts?

Mr. Waldegrave: I find the hon. Gentleman's concern about environmental pollution a little selective. We do not have the benefit of his advice in the House when we are debating pollution from coal-fired power stations. It is right that people inside and outside the House should recognise that the record at Sellafield has been good despite the problems, which my Department recognises and discusses with the management.

It is also right that those inside and outside the House should accept that some of those who attack Sellafield do so, not because they are worried about pollution, but because they see in the civil nuclear industry a dangerous competitor to the coal mining industry.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Franks: Will my hon. Friend accept that many hon. Members, particularly those who represent Cumbrian constituencies, are sick and tired of the lack of real information from Sellafield about incidents? Will he instruct BNFL that the public need to be reassured, not in the jargon of arrogant scientists, but in language that the layman can understand and accept?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The record is good, but there is no question but that we have to do better at getting that across to the people. We must make it clear that the public concern is being met and that the public institutions which exist to check that the record is good are open to public inspection.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Does the Minister accept that B30, where yesterday's incident took place, is about to be decommissioned because it is an old plant and is to be replaced by pond 5? I hope that no such incidents will take place in the future. Does he also accept that if the plant were to close there would be a loss not only of 11,000 jobs in West Cumbria but of a further 15,000 to 20,000 jobs which are indirectly involved in and dependent on the nuclear industry? In the light of that, is it not unacceptable that many people in Britain, including environmental groups, demand closure of the plant when they know that perfectly reasonable and sensible options are open to the industry to resolve the problems? Is it not fair to say that if the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate does its work in the way that it should there should be no problems in future?

Mr. Waldegrave: No one has a better right than the hon. Gentleman to speak on this matter, because he understands the real environmental concern and knows that they can be met. My Department strengthened the Radio Chemical Inspectorate last year and insisted on a greater monitoring programme by the plant. We are in discussion with my hon. Friends in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on a new authorising limit, as the hon. Gentleman knows. There is no problem here which cannot be dealt with. It will be dealt with and, in all the important cases, is already being dealt with. The hon. Gentleman is right in what he says about pond 5. That is another of the major steps to improvement at the plant.

Mr. Forman: Is it not clear that nothing useful will be achieved in this important matter by the hysterical approach of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? In view of that, will my hon. Friend take the trouble to put in *Hansard* the figures for the increased numbers of staff in the relevant inspectorates, which is important, and also the details of the long-run epidemiological monitoring, which is necessary to see that there is no damage to human health?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall be delighted to do as my hon. Friend requests, and I shall see that it is done. After the Black report, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services set up the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment to monitor those matters on a permanent basis. That was a sensible thing to do, and it received support from all those whose concern about this is serious and not merely hysterical.

Mr. Evans: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that some of us who have supported the nuclear industry all our political lives will reject his argument that those who express concern about the enviromental aspects of nuclear power are somehow trying to promote the coal industry? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that that is a false argument and only creates false impressions? Will he accept that some of us are growing increasingly worried about the competence and sometimes the arrogance of some of the higher levels of management in BNFL? Does he agree that it would be far better if management were more open and honest in giving answers on matters of direct concern to the public?

Mr. Waldegrave: I took great care to differentiate between people's concerns. The hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), whose constituents are near Sellafield, has more right and reason to be concerned about this matter than have many other hon. Members. I recognise that there are proper concerns, which are shared by Conservative Members, to ensure that the right thing is done and is seen to be done. In so far as the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) supports that aim, I certainly agree with him. I would not wish to say that everyone's concerns are hysterical. We must recognise that some people are deliberately stirring up the issue.

Mr. Hickmet: Great concern is felt about the announcement of the proposals by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive on the storage of nuclear waste. Why has there not been an announcement since that list was delivered on 8 January? Will there be an announcement shortly? Are alternative solutions being considered?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend can expect an announcement shortly. The matter has been under consideration by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Ministers collectively.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that those of us with nuclear power stations in our constituencies are concerned when nuclear waste is entrusted to the BNFL and incidents such as we have heard about occur? Will the hon. Gentleman ensure that Sellafield is open to international and European inspection? What discussions has the hon. Gentleman had with the Scottish and Welsh environmental departments about environmental aspects, and with the Irish Government, who have expressed serious concern about pollution in the Irish sea?

Mr. Waldegrave: I should like to reassure the hon. Gentleman that the Scottish and Welsh Offices and the Republic of Ireland are closely involved in this matter. Some months ago we set up with the Government of the

Republic a joint committee at official level, which has been working well and exchanging information. There is no reason to hide anything. There are good arrangements for inspection. Information is published and available and is reported to all the international organisations with an interest in it.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that parents in south-west Scotland, including my constituency, are genuinely worried about the effect of radioactive discharges from Sellafield and possible links with the high incidence of leukaemia? Does he agree that it does neither the work force at Sellafield nor parents any good for the management at Sellafied, after four incidents this year, to give yet more bland reassurances? They do not reassure parents. Will the hon. Gentleman meet Scottish Office Ministers to consider what urgent action can be taken to allay the genuine fears of parents in south-west Scotland?

Mr. Waldegrave: The first responsibility of all of us who have the privilege of being hon. Members and having all the information easily available to us is to do our part in allaying unnecessary fears. I know that the hon. Gentleman will do that. I shall certainly be delighted to meet my opposite numbers in the Scottish Office to discuss whether anything further should be done. We meet regularly on this issue.

Mr. Dickens: Is it not a fact that there is always a measurable risk in terms of health and safety at plants, whether petro-chemical plants, oil-fired power stations or steelworks? Is not the safety record of the nuclear industry second to none? Are not the safety measures which are rightly imposed on the industry also second to none? Does my hon. Friend therefore agree that the general public should not be alarmed, because the nuclear industry is a controllable industry on which we shall have to rely in future years?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is entirely right. There is no great industrial activity that does not contain some risk. I have to say that the nuclear industry is asked to work, and does work, to far higher tolerances of safety than any other industry. If one compares the number of people injured or even killed in other tragically high risk industries, or even higher risk industries, such as railways or mining, one finds that the record of the nuclear industry is second to none.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Minister realise that the country will regard his replies as extremely complacent, just as they regard the attitude of the chief spokesman for the Labour party as completely hypocritical? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. In fairness, I have not yet called the chief spokesman for the Labour party, and the hon. Gentleman must not cast such aspersions upon anybody in the House.

Mr. Hughes: The remarks made by the chief spokesman for the Labour party——

Hon. Members: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman would help the House and himself if he withdrew the statement.

Mr. Hughes: Mr. Speaker, at your behest I shall withdraw the remark. The remarks made by the chief spokesman for the Labour party in public are entirely unacceptable, because if the House had followed the advice of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Liberal party and all of his colleagues, who unanimously and alone in 1978 opposed the extension of reprocessing, we would not have had the problems that we have had since then. Will the Minister——

Hon. Members: Too long.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly, please.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Minister accept that unless there is a suspension of reprocessing, and until there is international inspection and a chance for the House to debate the Select Committee report, there will be no confidence in the Government, in BNFL or in its chairman?

Mr. Waldegrave: I advise the hon. Gentleman to read the eloquent speech of the leader of the Social Democratic party on the occasion of the debate on the THORP reprocessing plant. He might learn something that would be helpful to his contribution to these debates.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Minister accept that, with my hon. Friends, I regard the blaming of the work force for the problems of the management of the nuclear industry as unacceptable? We also regard mass unemployment, as advocated by the Liberal party spokesman, to solve the problems as unacceptable. Will he recognise that the series of incidents, however minor in radiological terms, which have occurred in the past few weeks at Sellafield can do nothing other than undermine public confidence in the industry and its future? In view of the Minister's remarks about the need for more openness, will the Government undertake to review the workings of the Official Secrets Act as it applies to the civil nuclear industry? Will the Government invite the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate — that arm of the Health and Safety Executive which is the public's statutory and independent watchdog in these matters — to carry out a rigorous, independent safety audit of the old part of the Magnox fuel reprocessing facilities at Sellafield? Will they ensure that such a report is made public and debated in the House? Will the Government reject the opportunist and contemptible remarks and inconsistent attitudes of the alliance, as demonstrated by the SDP and the Liberal party?

Mr. Waldegrave: For a moment I was not sure to whom the hon. Gentleman was pointing. It behoves us all to reject some of the irresponsible riding of bandwagons that there has been on this subject. It brings no pleasure to my Department or anyone else to have to read in the newspapers about the problems of Sellafield. We must all recognise that with an enormous plant, some of which is old in industrial terms, there will be some problems from time to time. We must keep a sense of proportion about the matter. We have a group examining the publication of information about environmental matters in general. I shall ensure that this matter is dealt with by that group. On the hon. Gentleman's second point, the Health and Safety Commission may well consider his suggestion carefully. It would seem to have some merit.

Football (Crowd Behaviour)

3. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent discussions he has had with the football authorities about crowd behaviour.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): We continue to review progress and issues in my working group, comprising representatives of the football authorities, the Home Office and Department of Transport. The group last met a week ago on Wednesday 12 February.

Mr. Canavan: In view of the Belgian Government's ban on all British teams playing in Belgium following the tragic events in the Heysel stadium last May, and the fact that Scotland has now been drawn to play Belgium in the European Nations Cup, will the Minister remind the Belgian Government that I am still awaiting the courtesy of a reply to my letter to them of last May in which I pointed out that FIFA and UEFA draw a distinction between Scottish and English football? They are not punishing Scottish football teams and their supporters for the misconduct of some English supporters. The Belgian Government should follow suit by lifting their ban immediately on Scottish teams and allow them to play in Belgium.

Mr. Tracey: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's anxiety. He has correctly drawn attention to the narrower definition put upon teams by UEFA and FIFA. It must be for the Belgian Government, with their much broader interpretation, to determine when and how they should ease their ban on British teams. In all the circumstances, I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to seek to intervene.

Mr. Powley: I support the discussions that have taken place between my hon. Friend and the football authorities, but does he agree that we need to encourage a greater sense of self-discipline in some sportsmen and some members of the crowds who go to sporting events, thus diminishing the amount of crowd and sportsmen's misbehaviour?

Mr. Tracey: I entirely agree. Within my working group we have had considerable discussions about the community interest which we encourage between football clubs and the communities around them. I applaud those football clubs which encourage community interest and family involvement.

Mr. Jim Callaghan: What discussion has the Minister had with the football authorities and the police in the light of the dreadful incident that occurred recently outside the Liverpool stadium, when soccer hooligans, not fans, squirted a harmful liquid into the faces of the Manchester United players? What preventive measures does he intend to take to stop the recurrence of such an incident, when a footballer may be seriously injured or killed?

Mr. Tracey: That was a regrettable incident and one which both sides of the House will deplore. It was a matter of public order and there is a police investigation into it. It would be wrong for me to comment further at this stage.

Inner City Regeneration

4. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what new proposals he has for regeneration of the inner cities.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): The Housing and Planning Bill was given a Second Reading on 4 February.

Mr. Lawler: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the £100 million underspend on urban development grant during the past three years represents many wasted opportunities for redevelopment of the inner cities? Will he pledge that the allocation will not be cut next year, but that officials will assist and encourage local authorities and other organisations to seek out more eligible schemes, especially in those areas, such as Bradford, which were excluded from the recent policy initiative?

Mr. Baker: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is regrettable that in the first two years of the urban development grant there was a slow take-up, to which the Select Committee has drawn attention. I have no doubt that UDG is an excellent type of grant, and it already supports 146 projects, involving £330 million. Bradford has benefited by about £5 million. I have seen the large derelict site in the middle of Bradford—a dump called Listerhills—and proposals are coming to me about it.

Mr. Robert Sheldon: Has the Secretary of State read the 10th report of this Session of the Public Accounts Committee, which shows that the urban programme has not been spent up to the limit agreed by the Treasury for each of the past three years? Is that not wrong and, indeed, disgraceful? What is he doing about it?

Mr. Baker: I am trying to ensure that we spend up to the limit. I have read the report, which is an interesting and useful contribution to the debate. I attach considerable importance to the urban programme. Where we have underspent on UDG, I have allocated it to, for example, development corporations and derelict land grant.

Mr. Heddle: As a high proportion of the buildings in inner cities are derelict, obsolete or under-utilised, will my right hon. Friend seriously consider redirecting part of the urban regeneration grant, which the Housing and Planning Bill introduces, and which Conservative Members welcome, to revitalise buildings as well as the land on which they stand?

Mr. Baker: The powers of grant that I am taking in the Housing and Planning Bill will allow me and other Ministers a considerable degree of flexibility in devising ways of supporting the inner cities, whether for land or for buildings. I am sure that money spent on the reclamation of derelict land in our cities is money well spent.

Mr. Cartwright: Does the Secretary of State accept that in the United States urban regeneration bonds offering tax free interest payments on long-term investments have been extremely successful in attracting private capital into declining urban areas? Will the Government use a similar incentive to attract much-needed private investment into our inner cities?

Mr. Baker: I am not particularly attracted by the advantages of industrial revenue bonds. The Federal Government in America are now moving to withdraw them. Our grants, the UDG and derelict land grant, and the new powers that I am taking under the Bill give Ministers the instruments to assist in the regeneration of cities.

Mr. Lyell: Will my right hon. Friend study carefully the evidence of large acreages of unused and derelict land

in the hands of local authorities and the Property Services Agency, and the unused and empty dwellings in the ownership of local authorities? Will he do everything that he can to ensure that they are sold to the private sector, so that private capital can be introduced to make a profit in the inner cities?

Mr. Baker: My hon. and learned Friend makes a good and fair point. We now have the registers of under-used and derelict land, and my predecessor and I have issued a number of directives about the disposal of that land. When there is a problem in housing and inner city regeneration, it is wrong that land should lie idle, especially land held and owned by public authorities.

Mr. John Fraser: Will the Secretary of State confirm that, in real terms, there will be no increase in financial assistance to the inner cities in the next financial year, and that he is now subordinate to an unelected member of the House of Lords regarding the development of inner city policy?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman is referring to the pilot studies in eight areas, which I fully support. They are directed at unemployed young people, and he should be sufficiently broad and wise to support those initiatives. I am anxious to make as many resources available as possible. I must find ways of attracting more private sector money into the cities.

Mr. Steen: Will my right hon. Friend avoid being drawn by the Opposition into competing in seeing how much money each side can pour into the bottomless pit of the inner cities? Does he agree that pouring more public money into the inner cities will not solve the problem?

Mr. Baker: It depends on how it is spent and how it is used. If the money is spent on the regeneration of workshop units, on regenerating old houses and warehouses, and on bringing life back to the cities, I believe that it will be money well spent.

Rate Support Grant

5. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations about the 1986-87 grant settlement he has received from non-metropolitan county councils since the rate support grant settlement for 1986-87 was approved in January.

Mr. Waldegrave: I met a deputation from Cumbria county council on 29 January and my hon. Friend met a deputation from Derbyshire county council on 6 February. In addition, we have received written representations from a number of shire counties since the settlement was approved.

Mr. Thorne: In a speech in December 1985 the Secretary of State referred to an expectation of 9·5 per cent. rate increases. From the first batch of Tory councils to announce increases, Buckinghamshire proposes 30 per cent. and Lincolnshire and Norfolk 22 per cent. Does that mean that they are chronic overspenders?

Mr. Waldegrave: Proposed rate increases in several shire counties are higher than we would have hoped—none is higher than in my own county of Avon, which is Labour-controlled — because there have been real increases in expenditure, which were no part of the Government's plans.

Mr. Higgins: Is my hon. Friend aware that many of those making representations welcome the decision to allocate more funds to the inner cities? Why was no attempt made to find offset savings from other Departments, rather than from the shire counties?

Mr. Waldegrave: The decisions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had to take about the allocation of ratepayers' and taxpayers' money were difficult, as they always are. It was thought right to respond to the concerns expressed in the House.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the Minister aware that some Conservative county councils will follow Conservative-controlled Sefton metropolitan district council, which intends to do a "Liverpool"? They are contemplating an illegal budget—underbudgeting in Sefton by £2 million —on the assumption that they might receive extra rate support grant during the financial year from money clawed back from overspending councils, which the Secretary of State can redistribute. Will he condemn that act of illegality by Conservative councils?

Mr. Waldegrave: If the hon. Gentleman finds it difficult to distinguish between the behaviour of Sefton and Liverpool councils, there is nothing that I can do to unconfuse him. It is perfectly right for a council to make a reasonable review of its reserves and revenues and to budget legally within them.

Sir Anthony Grant: Will my hon. Friend give an assurance that one result of the many representations that he has received about the current rate support grant will be the long-awaited and much-promised fairer deal next year for responsible shire counties?

Mr. Waldegrave: The outcome is always dependent upon the total provision and the total rate support grant percentage. Although I know that many of my hon. Friends find it difficult to accept, within those constraints several steps were taken to help the lower spending authorities.

Mr. Straw: As almost every one of the 29 shire authorities which have raised their rates by almost 20 per cent. is still proposing to spend below the standard of need set by the Government, why does the Minister not have the guts to admit that rates are rocketing in Conservative and Labour areas because of cuts in the rate support grant and not because of increases in expenditure? In the light of those figures, how can the Minister justify the wild claim made by the Secretary of State on 18 December that rate increases would be only 7·5 to 8 per cent., when increases of more than 20 per cent. were predicted, and were predictable?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman will find it difficult to make that allegation stick on my right hon. Friend, who is a most sober citizen. The fact—I have the figures in front of me—is that in many authorities where the rate increases are more than we would have wished, including Gloucestershire and Essex, there were real increases in spending, which were never part of the Government's plans.

Rating Reform

7. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the establishment of an accurate register for the proposed community charge.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I have so far received a small number of representations covering a range of issues in response to the recently published Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", but it is far too early to draw any conclusions from these.

Mr. Marlow: As both the electoral register and the community charge register will be available for public scrutiny, would it not be sensible and save a lot of bureaucracy if the information for both those registers were collected on the same form? Will my hon. Friend lay to rest the ridiculous red herring that the community charge is a tax on voting, because whether or not someone has paid the tax will have no effect on the right to vote?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend is right. The community charge is intended to be a charge for local services, not a charge on voting. It would be better to have separate registers, so that we can register those who would not necessarily be eligible for voting, but who would be eligible to pay the community charge.

Mr. Hardy: Have not the representations made the point that, in addition to the unnecessary bureaucratic cost, the vast majority of people will be worse off and that those who will gain the greatest benefit will be those who live in the biggest houses?

Mrs. Rumbold: The hon. Gentleman is not correct. The people who will gain most from the community charge will be the single who live alone. That represents many of the worst off in our community.

Mr. Squire: Is my hon. Friend not worried that the scheme may involve considerable administrative costs for local authorities, whether or not it leads to an increase in overtime?

Mrs. Rumbold: The community charge is likely to cause a small increase in administration, but we believe that the system will be so infinitely preferable to the present system that the additional cost will be well worth it.

Mr. Straw: Why will the Minister not at least listen to the anxiety expressed by the Home Office, that using the electoral register will seriously damage the integrity of that register and will be seen, especially by low-income families, as a disincentive to exercise the right to vote? If the Minister is determined to continue with the idea of a poll tax, will she at least recognise the overwhelming need to have entirely separate registers?

Mrs. Rumbold: Indeed, I do, and that is precisely what I said in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). There will be a separate register for the community charge, which I must repeat is not a poll tax. It is a charge for local services, to be paid by those who use local services.

Mr. Spencer: Does my hon. Friend agree that the proposed community charge would have a sobering effect on councils such as the city of Leicester, which, after an advantageous rate support grant settlement, is gleefully proclaiming that it will increase rates by 80 per cent.?

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. and learned Friend is right. The great advantage of the community charge is that there will be a direct link of accountability, wholly perceptible and transparent to the voters. That will be of immense advantage to those who live in an area. The idea of an 80 per cent. increase is disgraceful.

Manchester (Vacant Housing)

8. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide financial support to assist Manchester city council in purchasing vacant housing on private estates which building societies and private builders are unable to sell; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: It is for Manchester city council to decide its spending priorities. If it wishes to buy private sector houses to resell for owner-occupation either outright or under shared ownership terms, it is welcome to do so.

Mr. Litherland: Is the Minister aware that many young people who were forced into buying in the private sector because of the scarcity of rented accommodation are now abandoning their homes because they cannot meet their mortgage commitments? In one estate in Manchester, Central, 17 of 42 houses built two years ago are empty and vandalised. Does that not prove that the Tories have no housing policy? It is a scandal. The Government should provide the finance so that the county council can acquire those properties.

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman should recognise that one of the reasons for such houses falling into that state is the high rate levels levied by Manchester city council. I have correspondence in the Department from residents of Manchester who say that high rate rises are driving owner-occupiers out of their homes.

Mr. Sumberg: If my hon. Friend is minded to consider this matter, will he make it conditional on its application to areas wholly within the city of Manchester, bearing in mind that the leader of Manchester city council demanded the incorporation in that city of the Prestwich and Whitefield parts of my constituency? That demand is rejected and resented by the people who live there, because they do not wish to pay the high rates and have the extravagant services which Mancunians have to bear under the Labour party.

Mr. Patten: I can well understand why the constituents in those parts of my hon. Friend's constituency dread the possibility of coming under Manchester city council. I cannot understand why that council, when it is offered Government money, as I have offered, to conduct a proper study into housing conditions in the Hulme estate does not choose to take it and help its ratepayers.

"Faith in the City"

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has plans for further meetings with the Archbishop of Canterbury and members of his commission on the subject of the report "Faith in the City"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: When I met the Archbishop of Canterbury on 28 January I offered the assistance of my Department in following up his commission's work on the assessment of need in urban areas. We also agreed to look at the potential for joint initiatives involving Government programmes and the proposed Church urban fund.

Mr. Hughes: Given the announcement in another place on Monday by Lord Skelmersdale that the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor's committee that law centres should be funded is not to be taken up by the Government, and given that the worst crisis will come in the metropolitan counties and Greater London during the coming year because of their abolition, will the Secretary of State tell us whether he accepts the Archbishop's commission's recommendations that the law centres should be funded? If they cannot be funded by the Lord Chancellor's Department, will his Department look sympathetically at their funding next year?

Mr. Baker: The spokesman for the Liberal party is asking yet again for more expenditure in the inner cities. The Liberal party also asks for more spending in the shires, the rural districts and the suburbs. How is all this Liberal largesse to be funded? Where is the money to come from? The hon. Gentleman would be infinitely more credible if he set out how we are to fund all the special interest groups which the Liberal party promises to support. The Liberal party comes to the House and weeps and wrings its hands over every special interest group, but where is the money to come from?

Mr. Lilley: When my right hon. Friend met the Archbishop, did he draw to his attention the excellent comment on the Archbishop's report by the Chief Rabbi? In particular, did he draw to the Archbishop's attention the comment by the Chief Rabbi that in the Archbishop's report Christian charity was roughly balanced by a measure of blatant political bias?

Mr. Baker: I have read the document from the Chief Rabbi entitled, "From Doom to Hope", and I was so impressed with it that I asked the Chief Rabbi to meet me to discuss it. Some of the sentiments expressed are plain speaking and good. One of them reads:

"A Jewish religious contribution would lay greater emphasis on building up self respect by encouraging ambition and enterprise . . . let them [parents] encourage ambition and excellence in every negro child as Jewish parents encourage in their children and they will pull down their ghetto walls as surely as we demolished ours."

Mr. Heffer: Has the right hon. Gentleman looked carefully at the housing proposals in the commission's report? If so, what is the right hon. Gentleman's response? Will we get a real response, or will we get the usual guff that we had from the right hon. Lady the Prime Minister the other night on television?

Mr. Baker: During my meeting with the Archbishop, we discussed that matter. The commission intends to develop a form of neighbourhood partnership that will be directed towards housing, among other things. I am also holding discussions with various large financial institutions on ways in which they can help to deal with the housing problems in our cities and towns.

Dr. Hampson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one hope for the inner cities is the idea of a task force, on the lines of the Liverpool task force? Does he further agree that £8 million for the new task forces can be only a beginning if we are to have effective leverage to draw in private money? Which Minister will be responsible for the Leeds and northern task forces?

Mr. Baker: The task forces will cover a population of only 300,000. We will have to see how they get on. I am optimistic that they will show results in a short time. They are especially directed towards dealing with the problems of young unemployed people, especially from ethnic minorities, in the inner cities.

There are several instruments to hand — the new urban renewal grant, which can bring in money, and the other grants to which I have already referred. We must find ways to attract more private sector development and finance into the inner cities. The public sector must act as a catalyst for that.

Dr. Cunningham: Does the Secretary of State not recognise that local authorities are, and will remain, a major and significant force to tackle the problems of the inner cities? Given that, is it not a humiliation for the right hon. Gentleman and his ministerial colleagues to have been elbowed aside from that responsibility, which has now been given to the Department of Employment?

How can the people of Britain's inner cities be sanguine, or even hopeful, about the Government's policies when, in the words of the Audit Commission, they have resulted in a 20 per cent. cut in real terms in the resources available to tackle the problems? Is £8 million not peanuts when set beside the scale of those cuts? Does it not all add up to the fact that while this Government and their policies remain, the problems of Britain's inner cities will continue to mount?

Mr. Baker: I fundamentally disagree with the hon. Gentleman. While we have been in office the urban programme has increased from below £100 million to more than £300 million. We have introduced a variety of grants, and we are introducing another this year, to help with the problems.

We must marshall all the resources available from the public sector, and that is the purpose of the pilot studies in the inner cities. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would give them a little more welcome. The studies were welcomed by his hon. Friends, so why can he not welcome them?

Hackney Black People's Association

10. **Mr. Ottaway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the funding of the Hackney Black People's Association.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I believe that most of the funding for Hackney Black People's Association comes from the GLC and Hackney borough council. In 1985-86 those two authorities are providing nearly £30,000 for an advice and information centre and for Afro-Caribbean arts and cultural activities. The association also manages a youth communications project, which has received support from the Hackney inner area programme amounting to £21,300 this year. This project aims to develop the communication skills of young unemployed black people and to improve their employment prospects.

Mr. Ottaway: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Hackney Black People's Association recently offered a platform to Mr. Louis Farrakhan, the anti-semitic admirer of Adolf Hitler? Is that a proper use of GLC funds?

Sir George Young: I was amazed that an association which purports to foster good race relations issued an invitation to someone who is notorious for his anti-semitic views. I was delighted that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary refused him admission.

Mr. Sedgemore: Does the Minister accept that most hon. Members deplore the anti-semitic views of Mr. Farrakhan, with his disgusting references to God's ovens, just as they deplore the attempts by the hon. Member for Northampton, North to bad mouth the Hackney Black People's Association and to act in a fashion that is calculated, if not designed, to incite racial hatred in Hackney? Does the Minister accept that all we ask for in Hackney is equivalent treatment with the people in the City of London down the road? When will we get that?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) is an influential person, but I should be very surprised if his question this afternoon were to raise the temperature in Hackney.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) referred to me, when he meant another hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take points of order after Question Time.

Housing Stock

11. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the current level of investment in improving the quality of the existing housing stock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The primary responsibility for deciding how much should be spent on improving the housing stock rests with the owners.

Mr. Hicks: At a time when over 200,000 building trade workers are unemployed, when almost 4 million houses are classified as substandard in some way, and when there are lengthy waiting lists for home improvement grants, including 2,000 in my constituency, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is both economic stupidity and political folly not to embark upon a major home improvement investment programme in this labour-intensive activity, similar to what we had three years ago?

Mr. Baker: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I remind him that provision for local authority housing capital expenditure next year, 1986-87, is £2,532 million, which is some 9 per cent. up on this year, and that local authorities and new town development corporations are spending about £2·5 billion a year on maintaining and modernising their stock.

Mr. Rooker: Is not the outturn this year higher than the planned expenditure? Is it not the case that even the Government's modest increase is less than the outturn, so that there is a cut? Should it not be the aim of any Government committed to decent housing for all the people to make sure that there is enough investment, from whatever sources, to improve and maintain the housing stock at a rate at least equal to the rate of deterioration? Why do the Government not have that as their aim?

Mr. Baker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we do have that as our aim. Spending on repairs and improvement to private housing stock is running at a massive £9 billion a year. While we have been in office we have paid out some £2·5 billion in grants to the private sector. This year the amount is likely to be £500 million.

Football (Crowd Behaviour)

12. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when he next meets the secretary of the Football Association, he will raise with him the measures being taken by the football authorities to regulate the numbers and conduct of persons travelling to other countries in connection with football matches; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Yes. These matters are covered by the European convention agreed last year, following a United Kingdom initiative, and require co-operation between Governments and football authorities. We are considering particular steps needed for the World Cup in Mexico and the European Nations Cup.

Mr. Janner: When considering the problems of people travelling to and in foreign countries on football business, will the Minister please consider the tragic death of my constituent, Mr. Jim Grey, a football coach teaching in Saudi who was knocked down and killed by a vehicle? Will he consider the deplorable lack of advance in any prospect of his widow receiving compensation? Will he please consult the Football Association and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to see what can be done to help that lady?

Mr. Tracey: We have great sympathy for the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituent. After considerable efforts with the Saudi authorities, the Football Association's general secretary has sought our advice. It is primarily a matter for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is considering what advice and help it can give.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Why is it that the proper game of football, namely, rugby union, can be played between England and Scotland in the Calcutta Cup without problems — that is, apart from England losing — yet soccer causes so many problems?

Mr. Tracey: I am not sure that in the context of the original question travel between England and Scotland is travel between foreign places, but I take note of what my hon. Friend has said.

Bison System Flats

13. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the criteria upon which he grants local authorities loan sanction in respect of the demolition of multi-storey Bison system flats.

Sir George Young: Local authorities do not need loan sanction for the demolition of housing which they own. However, they may now apply to continue to receive housing subsidy in relation to the original costs of such housing. Such applications should be made before deciding to demolish, and my right hon. Friend will agree to them only if he is satisfied that the alternatives to demolition have been fully assessed, including disposal to the private sector.

Mr. Brown: The Minister well knows that local authorities need the subsidy. Is he not making up his policy as he goes along? Why is he condemning people to live in these terrible dwellings? In particular, how can he justify allowing Newcastle city council to demolish, with subsidy, three of the four Bison flats in my constituency, and not allow the demolition of the fourth?

Sir George Young: We have allowed subsidy to continue on two blocks—Crescent and Parade Houses—and the application for a third block is before us now. The reason why there is a problem with the fourth block is that it has already been demolished.

Marine Nature Reserve

14. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on progress being made to establish the first marine nature reserve.

Mr. Waldegrave: Good progress is being made at Lundy. The Nature Conservancy Council hopes to go out to consultation in the spring and put formal proposals to my right hon. Friend in the summer.

Mr. Carlisle: I respect my hon. Friend's efforts to achieve voluntary agreement for the first marine nature reserve, but it is now more than four years since the Wildlife and Countryside Act gave us the obligation to establish such reserves. If voluntary agreement for a marine nature reserve is not reached in the very near future, will my hon. Friend ensure that Parliament takes powers so that the Government can impose the first reserve?

Mr. Waldegrave: I gave a pledge—to my hon. Friend, I believe—that we must have a reserve within 12 to 18 months of a commitment that I made some time ago. We are still within that time scale, but we are watching the situation very closely, because no further slippage would be tolerable.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order afterwards.

Mr. Skinner: So long as I can make it before the Minister of State leaves the Chamber.

British Leyland Subsidiaries

3.30 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a further statement on the disposal of British Leyland subsidiaries in the light of the deadline on negotiations announced by the Government.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): As I told the House on Monday, other proposals for the future of the Land Rover, Freight Rover and Leyland Trucks businesses, which are the subject of current discussions between BL and GM, would be considered on their commercial merits. I named those who were willing to have their interests made public. Since then there has been no material change in the position.

As I said on Monday, it is in the interests of all concerned in the industry that these negotiations should come to a successful end as soon as they conceivably can so that damaging uncertainty can be removed. Accordingly, those companies indicating an interest in one or more of these businesses have been asked by the BL board to indicate by 4 March whether they have a firm intention to make an offer.

Mr. Smith: When the Secretary of State made his statement on Monday 17 February, why did he not tell the House about the deadline of Tuesday 4 March and also about the deadline requiring those wishing to meet BL senior management to do so before 28 February? I understand that the Secretary of State gave information about this to the lobby yesterday evening. Given that a letter was sent by Hill Samuel, apparently acting on behalf of the Government, informing interested parties of those deadlines on 14 February—three days before the right hon. Gentleman's last statement to the House—why did not the Secretary of State tell the House of Commons that those deadlines had been set?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that one of the interested parties—General Motors—has been having secret discussions for the past nine months? In those circumstances, why has such a sharp deadline been set for the others? Does this mean that the Government are merely going through the motions in respect of other intending purchasers? When, if at all, is it proposed to consult the representatives of the thousands of employees whose livelihood is entirely connected with the future of British Leyland subsidiaries?

As the Secretary of State apparently confirmed to the lobby yesterday evening, it seems that there are now six named bidders for Land Rover. Has it occurred to the Government that it might be wise to keep that company rather than sell it as everyone else seems so interested in acquiring it?

Will the Secretary of State also confirm that he told the lobby yesterday that if the General Motors proposal went ahead it would probably require a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission? Will he clarify that point, which was put to the lobby but has never been discussed in the House?

Finally, will the hon. Gentleman reflect on what the Minister of State said last night? When asked whether there would be an Adjournment debate on this, the Minister of State replied that the House of Commons was sovereign. Does that mean that there will be a full parliamentary debate on the whole issue before any deal is struck?

Mr. Channon: As for what the right hon. and learned Gentleman said about the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, I did not say that to the lobby. [*Interruption.*] I did not mention the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

As for consultation with the work force — [*Interruption.*] I have never mentioned the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. As to the work force, the BL board told me that it intends to communicate with the work force at once, or as soon as possible. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] That is a matter for the board, but I think at once.

As for secret discussions with General Motors, I do not think that anybody can say that they were very secret. The discussions have been going on for quite a long time, as I have explained to the House many times. [HON. MEMBERS: "How long?"]

As for the so-called deadline, I should have thought that the right hon. and learned Gentleman had at least this in common with the Government—we must come to a conclusion about these matters in the reasonably near future. Surely any responsible hon. Member on either side of the House, whatever his views about the future of those companies, should wish for a conclusion at a very early date. That is why I think it is right for the BL board to do as it has—to say that, by 4 March, other businesses should have a firm intention to make an offer. I hope that they will then be appraised during March and that we shall be able to come to conclusions soon.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us agree entirely with him that, in the interests of those who work in the company, we should bring any negotiations to a conclusion as speedily as possible? Does he further agree that it is damaging to the work force to see all of these negotiations, at the instigation of the Opposition, conducted in public to their detriment?

Mr. Channon: I agree with my hon. Friend on both counts. We must try to act in the interests of people in those companies and to reach a sensible conclusion rather than make party political capital.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Why are the merchant bankers Hill Samuel involved in these discussions? Who appointed them? Is there any connection with the fact that a director of BL is also a director of Hill Samuel? Is this another example of the City of London taking an opportunity to feather its nest at the expense of British industry?

Mr. Channon: The hon. Gentleman is talking hysterical nonsense. The British Leyland board, like other companies in these circumstances, has its own merchant bankers, and Hill Samuel happens to be the merchant bank acting for it.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be better to reach the right decision more slowly than the wrong decision more quickly? Will he bear in mind that in Britain's negotiations with Ford, Chrysler and General Motors there have been promises and assurances but very little compliance with either?

Mr. Channon: I want to come to the right conclusion in reasonably quick time because I believe that that is essential in the interests of the companies concerned and of all of those who work in them and want them to succeed in the future.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) referred to the letter of 14 February. Why did not the Secretary of State tell the House of Commons about the deadline?

Mr. Channon: I have not seen the letter of 14 February. *[Interruption.]* Nor is it in any way surprising that that should be the case. Hill Samuel is the merchant banker to the BL board, not to me.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): Will British bidders be given a reasonable time scale in which to submit their bids? Should not Ministers give preference to British bidders quite unashamedly, not because we are anti-American—far from it—but because the assurance of British ownership should be more acceptable to the Government than assurances from overseas owners, no matter how prestigious they may be?

Mr. Channon: I can assure my hon. Friend, as I have done on many occasions, that we shall give serious consideration to any bids. No bids have so far been received.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Will the Secretary of State recognise that both sides of the House want a clear assurance that it is the policy of the Government that British Leyland should remain British Leyland and that it should not become American Leyland? Therefore, as a matter of policy, should not preference be given to those bids that come from other British companies? Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that this decision cannot be left to the BL board itself as national assets are involved?

Mr. Channon: The Government's policy is to have the best solution for these companies, whether it be American or British. I am far more concerned with the need to achieve a proper future for these companies, and that, I suggest, is what any responsible hon. Member should be working towards.

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): In the face of all this synthetic indignation, does my right hon. Friend accept that ever since the Government announced their intention to privatise British Leyland it has been quite plain that bids were open for any part of British Leyland? In view of the Opposition's belated and mischevious attempt to make political capital out of this and to cause further delay and uncertainty among all those who supply truck and bus and Land Rover, who work in the company and who sell the product, surely there is a need for an early and decisive conclusion to this matter?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and I hope that that is the general wish in the House.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The Secretary of State is giving the impression that he is not answering the question that has been put to him three times by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and two of my other hon. Friends. Was he aware of the letter sent by Hill Samuel, whether he read it or not? Was he aware of the deadline? If he was, why was the House not told of it when he made his statement on Monday?

Mr. Channon: I answered the hon. Gentleman's question a moment ago. I have given the House the fullest information in my possession, and I have answered any questions that the House has put to me; I shall go on doing so. During the past two weeks there has been a private notice question on 3 February, a debate on 5 February, a statement on 6 February, questions on 12 February, a private notice question on 17 February, a debate on 18 February, and another private notice question on 19 February. The idea that hon. Members have not had the chance to question me is ridiculous.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that any arrangement between General Motors and Leyland Trucks will not succeed unless the management and unions in those firms are able to agree the details? As neither the management at plant level nor the unions yet know the details of any proposal, what is the point of constantly raising the matter in this House? Neither the work force nor management have yet had any firm proposals on which to negotiate.

Mr. Channon: As my hon. Friend knows, at the present stage no bids have been received from any quarter for these companies. We must try to get to a situation where sensible decisions can be taken, but negotiating in public, as the Opposition would clearly like to do, is very damaging for the future of the companies concerned.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May we have an assurance that, whatever happens in the end, Japanese Isuzu diesel engines will not be fitted to Land Rover or Range Rover?

Mr. Channon: When I last spoke in a debate such as this, I said that satisfactory assurances would have to be obtained before I could recommend any deal to the House.

Mr. John Mark Taylor (Solihull): Will my right hon. Friend accept, and take note of, the virtues of management buy-outs with worker participation, such as in the National Freight Consortium? Will he consider the application of such a scheme to the future of Land Rover, and will he consider it consistent with wider ownership of shares, which our party has always advocated?

Mr. Channon: As I told my hon. Friend on another occasion, if a serious proposal comes forward, it will be considered.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): If the right hon. Gentleman knew of the deadline set out in the letter of 14 February, why did he not previously tell the House of its existence?

Mr. Channon: I have set no deadline—4 March is simply the date by which BL expects alternative interested parties to declare a firm intention of making an offer. That seems to be wholly reasonable. I have kept nothing from the House.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it has always been the inviolate rule of British Leyland to tell the work force before anybody else what is going on that affects its interest? Does he agree that those of us who have a real interest in the work force, those of us who have a constituency interest as I do,

[Mr. Robert Atkins]

as the Member for Leyland, find the activities of the Labour party, supported by those who will jump on any bandwagon, scurrilous and disgraceful and worrying the work force even more than it is now?

Mr. Channon: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): As there has been considerable speculation about the fact that General Motors will not purchase other parts of BL unless Land Rover is included, will the Secretary of State give an assurance that the Land Rover part of the deal can be disentangled from the General Motors bid, and that a purchaser from Britain can make a serious offer for it?

Mr. Channon: Any proposal will be looked at on its merits. I understand that the GM board wishes to buy both companies or neither, but, as I have already tried to explain, I would never agree to a deal for Land Rover unless I were convinced that is would be in the long-term interest of Land Rover—and that with a GM deal if satisfactory assurances can be obtained and with the American outlets available—I could see a secure and good future for Land Rover.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Concern about this matter comes not only from the west midlands but equally from my constituency, where several hundred jobs are involved. Does my right hon. Friend accept that we should prefer to see a longer negotiating time scale if that meant that a British bid could be acceptable? I accept that it is difficult to conduct negotiations via the House, but I hope that, before the lobby, the House of Commons will have a say as to where a nationalised industry which should remain British goes.

Mr. Channon: I assure my hon. Friend that there will be time for any serious bid from any source to be considered. No bids have yet been seen. There have been some declarations of interest in the companies concerned. I agree that bidding companies must be given an opportunity to make their proposals. I believe that what the BL board proposes is adequate.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that the widespread doubt and uncertainty has largely been created by his own inept and incompetent performance? Will he acknowledge that this is not just a question of Leyland, and if there is any reduction in production by BL it will have a major impact on the Pilkington factory in St. Helens, which is a major supplier of glass to the industry? Will he bear that in mind?

Mr. Channon: I shall bear that in mind. I reject the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Some of the major component suppliers to this industry, and I have permission to quote Guest Keen and Nettlefolds — *[Interruption.]* So hon. Members wish to laugh at the components manufacturers. GKN has said that, subject to satisfactory assurances, the Bedford-Leyland merger and the GM ownership of Land Rover would be desirable from the United Kingdom point of view.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of us agree that this virtually daily questioning is not helpful to solving the problem? But will he also bear in mind that it underlines not just the wishes of the House but the fact that the people of this nation wish to see not an American dream come true to control our motor industry but a British dream come true—a viable British alternative to the problem? Carelessly and quickly selling out is like marriage, which is meant to be for ever; and once one has sold out it is for ever. Will my right hon. Friend make sure that before he sells out to General Motors he gives the British people a genuine chance to control their destiny?

Mr. Channon: My hon. Friend has made his views clear on many occasions and I respect them. I have already assured the House that I will give a genuine chance to any serious bid that comes forward and I repeat that assurance to my hon. Friend today. I am grateful to him for what he said in the first half of his question. It is difficult for all those involved in the companies to have this daily barrage which the Opposition are clearly trying to create for party political reasons.

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): Is the Secretary of State aware that an official group from British Leyland came to the House yesterday to make it clear that, in its opinion, the bus and truck division, in which it has invested considerable skill and effort, must remain in public hands?

Mr. Channon: That is a view that I understand, but it has never been the Government's view, because we believe that we should privatise those industries.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Does my right hon. Friend agree that had it not been for United States investment in Britain since the war our industrial base would be a great deal smaller than it is and, since a large part of that investment was sanctioned by the Labour party when it was in power, will he reject this hypocritical anti-Americanism and put the interests of the work force and the business first in any discussions that take place?

Mr. Channon: Yes, I will. American investment in Britain has been very much welcomed and there has been substantial British investment in the United States. Labour Members, with their anti-American taunts, are playing a dangerous game. They are threatening the livelihoods of thousands of people employed by American companies in Britain, including General Motors and Ford.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must move on.

Points of Order

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises from written question No. 153 on today's Order Paper from the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) in the answer to which the press was informed of a No. 10 briefing this morning that the Government intended once again to readjust the monthly unemployment statistics downwards.

You will recall that on a previous occasion, Mr. Speaker, when the Government readjusted the unemployment figures downwards on 12 November 1982, by over 200,000 it was covered by a statement to the House, and that on the second occasion, in April 1983, when the readjustment downwards was more than 350,000, it was included in a statement by the Chancellor to the House.

It is an affront to the House that the non-elected Secretary of State for Employment is not accountable to this House for his actions. Indeed, he is in contempt of the House and past practices in hiding away this further readjustment of the unemployment figures in a written reply, particularly when, in employment questions yesterday, the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment addressed himself to the question and did not answer it.

May I appeal to you, Mr. Speaker, as the protector of rights in the House, to appeal to other quarters to see whether a statement can be made to the House tomorrow about a further fiddling down of the unemployment figures?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for answers given to written questions. The hon. Gentleman's point of order will have been heard by the Government Front Bench.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker—there seems to be a curious lack of Labour Members on their feet inclined to join in on it. I believe that written answers should be given to the House. I do not approve of the practice whereby the press obtains answers before the House. I regret that that has taken place. The question has been answered by way of written answer. It is a perfectly routine answer which speaks for itself. I advise the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to address himself to its contents. I think that he will find that it will cause little excitement.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Last week, you said that, whenever a point of order was raised to which a Minister responded, the response would be treated as a statement. I want to make it absolutely clear before I raise my other point of order that I hope that my point of order will not prejudice the rights of my colleagues to have another crack at the Minister in calling for a statement on the unemployment figures.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is always helpful to me. I called him on a point of order. Will he please put his point of order to me?

Mr. Skinner: During Environment Questions, the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government said when I called for an inquiry into Sellafield that I had not shown any interest in contaminiation and pollution in the coal industry and associated industries. I wish to point out that the Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is an old hand. He knows the rules better than most.

Mr. Skinner: This is a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member knows equally well that it is not in order to continue——

Mr. Skinner: It is a genuine point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member knows perfectly well that it is not in order to continue Question Time by means of a point of order. Many things are said in the House with which hon. Members disagree. The hon. Member will put his point of order to me, not to the Minister.

Mr. Skinner: It is a point of order for you, Mr. Speaker. It is well-known in the House that, when an hon. Member misleads the House about another hon. Member. it is a matter for the Speaker. The Minister said that I had not participated in any exercises against contamination, other than Sellafield. In defending this call for the Minister to withdraw that misleading statement, I point out that in 1976 I called for the closure of a plant in my constituency because Coalite Industries Ltd. was producing dioxin. The Minister in question then was working for Arnold Weinstock, and trying to get the nuclear power industry contracts. The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government has a duty to withdraw his statement.

Mr. Speaker: I think that the whole House would agree that there is no dispute about the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He is an assiduous Member. There is no controversy about that.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you please help me? How can it be possible for the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) to ask for your ruling on how the formula for unemployment figures is calculated and for that question to be in order, yet only the other day your office advised me that I could not raise with the Chair questions about the actions of the Select Committee on Defence in exceeding the powers given to it under the Standing Orders? Your office told me that I could not raise that matter with you in relation to the conduct of the House.

It seems strange that a technical detail, such as the formula for compiling the unemployment figures, can be raised on a point of order, yet what is transparently happening in relation to certain Select Committees, such as the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and the Select Committee on Defence, which are exceeding the powers laid down by Parliament in the Standing Orders, cannot be raised on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member has raised an important point. I should like to say to the whole House that we are getting into the habit of having points of order raised virtually every day which have absolutely nothing to do with me but have to do with the Government Front Bench. The hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) is right. When a right hon. or hon. Member gets to his feet on a point of order, I have no idea what he will say. If hon.

[Mr. Speaker]

Members went to the Table Office for advice, they would receive exactly the same advice that the hon. Member for Harborough received.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I can understand your concern—I am sure it is shared throughout the House—at the number of times that it has been necessary to use the facility of points of order to try to secure information which truly and genuinely should be volunteered by the Government by direct means to the House of Commons so that they can be cross-questioned. When a Government resorts to other means—press leaks, written answers or press briefings—to ensure that they are not scrutinised in the House, can you suggest any way of dealing with the matter other than by raising points of order?

Mr. Terry Davis (Brimingham, Hodge Hill): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of what you said recently on a similar occasion, may I ask you to rule that the comments made by the Paymaster General on a point of order were equivalent to a statement on which he can now be questioned by hon. Members?

Mr. Speaker: I rule in particular circumstances and, if I may put it this way to the House, I am sure the House will agree that it is a question of the context in which things are said and done. It would be an unfortunate ruling if I were to say that every time a Minister got to his feet to assist the House it became a statement. That might mean that Ministers would never get to their feet, and that would not be to the benefit of the House.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is about the third time in 12 years that I have raised a point of order in the House. Is it not an abuse of the procedures and privileges of the House for the Minister who was answering questions yesterday and was asked specifically about the subject of employment statistics not to answer that question or give the House the information when today a written answer has been given which suggests a change? Surely the Government cannot have arrived at a change of policy in 24 hours. Surely Back Benchers have rights. The Government have ignored and abused the privileges of hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: This is an Opposition day, so hon. Members are taking time away from Back Benchers and the Opposition in raising points of order. I have no responsibility for answers given to questions.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that this will be a constructive point of order. The hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), when he was asking his question, gave a rather colourful description of an hon. Member. He mentioned my constituency, implying that he was referring to me. I now understand that he did not mean my constituency. I wonder whether he could have an opportunity to put the record straight.

Mr. Speaker: Certainly not. Fortunately, my microphones do not always pick up the colourful descriptions.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, referring to Question Time. Yesterday, in Prime Minister's Question Time, you allowed five questions on the subject of Afghanistan. Today, in Environment Questions, you allowed two questions on housing in Manchester when quite a number of Members wanted to speak.

Mr. Speaker: That is an important point. I think that the whole House would be interested to know about it. It was a rare occasion in Prime Minister's Questions yesterday when we had a substantive question. Most of the questions to the Prime Minister are open and are basically on the same subject. I took a judgment today, and I accept that we did not get far with Environment questions. I decided that the matter of the Sellafield leak was of major interest to hon. Members and I allowed questions on it to run a little.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda) *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is using the hon. Gentleman's own time, but I will take the point of order if it is legitimate.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It arises out of the statement made by the Paymaster General earlier. Am I right in understanding that the answer to a written question was given without his knowledge or consent? I see that he is nodding. Will he confirm that that is the truth? An answer to a written question was given without his consent. I see that he is nodding. That is enough.

Mr. Dave Nellist (Coventry, South-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I remember correctly, on Monday, when we had an exchange on the subject of British Leyland, you said that those hon. Members who were not called on that occasion would take precedence next time the subject was raised. I have constituents working for Austin Rover, Land Rover, Unipart, Self-Changing Gears and other parts of Leyland. I and other Labour Members did not get the chance today to raise the question of the dismissal of the senior shop steward of the Transport and General Workers Union at Land Rover, Solihull, for opposing privatisation. I wanted to bring that to your notice. I want to bring to your notice our resolute opposition to privatisation of BL, in whole or in part, with American or British capital.

Mr. Speaker: I did say that. I am sorry that I did not call the hon. Gentleman. I think that I should have done so.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 7 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. John Evans.

Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Mr. Geoff Lawler.

BILLS PRESENTED

EMPLOYMENT (AGE LIMITS)

Mrs. Ann Clwyd, supported by Ms. Jo Richardson, Ms. Clare Short, Mr. Richard Caborn, Mr. Clive Soley, Mr. Doug Hoyle, Mr. John Marek, Ms. Harriet Harman, Mr. George Foulkes, Mr. Brian Sedgemore, Mr. Roland Boyes, and Mr. John McWilliam presented a Bill to prohibit the use of age limits in job appointments, training schemes, promotion, retirement and advertising of jobs; to make other provision relating to employment; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 18 April and to be printed. [Bill 88.]

HIGHWAYS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Michael Cocks, supported by Mr. Malcolm Bruce, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Mr. Frank Haynes, Mr. Robert Hicks, Mr. Daniel Knox, Mr. Ken Weetch, Mr. Dafydd Wigley and Mr. Gordon Wilson, persented a Bill to amend the Highways Act 1980 so as to impose penalties in cases where a user of a highway is injured, interrupted or endangered in consequence of the lighting of a fire on the highway or elsewhere: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 21 February and to be printed. [Bill 89.]

Amendment of the Constitution of the House of Lords (Bishops)

4.6 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the constitution of the House of Lords in relation to membership of bishops and to make consequential provision.

Frequently, when I am asked what is needed to be a Member of Parliament I reply, patience, a strong constitution and a loud voice. Never does that apply quite so much as when one has a ten-minute Bill. Patience in this context goes back to the year 1301, because my ten-minute Bill seeks to amend the constitution. It is sometimes thought that we do not have a written constitution and that everything is by precedent. That is very often true, but for bishops it is untrue. The place of bishops in the House of Lords is enshrined in law and has been ever since laws were validated in this country.

I was surprised to find from my researches that the number of bishops first established by Henry VIII in 1550 was 26. Today, we still have 26. After all those years, the number is the same. There have been changes, such as the disestablishment of the Welsh Church and the Irish Church, and other changes over the years, but in spite of them the number of bishops in the other place has remained constant at 26 — two archbishops and 24 bishops.

The restoration Act laid down that the five senior prelates—the two archbishops, the Bishop of Durham, the Bishop of London and the Bishop of Winchester—shall sit in the House of Lords as of right. All the other bishops take Buggins' turn to bring the numbers up. That was established by statute in 1847.

Why, as a Member of the House of Commons, am I seeking to alter the constitution of the House of Lords? The answer is that that is the way in which it has always been done. The Commoners have initiated the legislation, the Lords have rejected it, and ultimately the Commoners have made it law. I want to strengthen the House of Lords, and I think that one way to do that is to ensure that it reflects the more ecumenical society in which we live and is a true reflection of the nation. I also hope that in that way we would have greater integration of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It is significant that right back to Henry VIII's Act of 1550 one bishopric only was deliberately excluded—that of Sodor and Man. It is excluded because the bishop who holds that see is automatically a Member of the Manx House. That applies to no bishop other than an English one. This is the Parliament of the United Kingdom. It is not the Parliament of England. It should reflect and expand in the House of Lords Church leaders' views from all parts of the country. It should not be confined merely to those in England.

There will be a rumble from people who will say, "This is the short road to disestablishing the Church." I shall remind hon. Members of the report of the Archbishop's commission, "Church and State", which was published in 1970. It said:

"it is hard to define what is meant by the term 'Church as by law established'." The words . . .were originally used to denote the statutory process by which the allegiance of the Church of England . . . and the forms of worship and doctrines of that Church were imposed by law."

[Mr. Richard Holt]

Many right hon. and hon. Members who are here today took part in the famous debate of 1974. I recommend that all hon. Members read the 100 pages of *Hansard* to see that the measure debated was a step down the road toward what one might call disestablishment, but it has not happened. Like the other snares and red herrings put out from time to time, it is not true. I am not seeking to disestablish anyone. I am trying to establish more people. That will be seen by what I want to introduce into the House of Lords.

The Bill seeks to phase out 12 of the 26 English anglican bishops. The best way to make progress in such matters is slowly, patiently and by negotiation. The law has been around for 355 years, and I do not seek to change it in 10 minutes. Why should I?

I shall go back to the beginning and show why there are any bishops at all in the House of Lords. They are there because King Edward I in 1300 could not read or write and someone had to take the minutes. They put bishops in, and the bishops have been there ever since.

I want the bishops in the House of Lords to reflect society. I seek to introduce there the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Archbishop of the Church of Wales, who was shamefully disestablished in 1920 by Lloyd George for political purposes, the Primate of All Ireland and Bishop of Armagh, and the four Catholic cardinals, archbishops or bishops, as appropriate of Westminster, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Armagh, the Methodist Chairman or his nominee and the Chief Rabbi.

I may be criticised for not extending the list to other religions and forms of worship. I am deliberately reducing the numbers by 12 and introducing nine to allow additional people to be put forward for nomination in the fulness of time.

I shall give some of the statistical evidence on various forms of church worship today. In part, the statistics lie behind my thinking. The statistics have been supplied by the House of Commons Library. The best measure that it has is the number of communicants. The Church of England had 1·9 million in 1900 and has 1·5 million today. The Church of Scotland had 1·1 million and now has 900,000. There were 1·9 million Catholics in 1900 and 5 million today. There were 770,000 Methodists and there are now 451,000, and there are 350,000 Jews. Religions without a clear leader do not deserve to be considered, but I do not exclude them. I am trying to introduce harmony, not discord. I am trying to see that in the other place more people bring thoughts and words like those of the Chief Rabbi to parliamentary debates.

I should like to think that everyone, irrespective of the immediate reaction, would like to think about this proposal, because if it saved one life in Northern Ireland it would be a measure well worth introducing.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Richard Holt, Mr. Robert Key, Sir John Stradling Thomas, Mr. Derek Conway, Mr. Michael Stern, Mr. Steve Norris, Mr. William Cash, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Michael J. Martin and Mr. Albert McQuarrie.

Amendment of the Constitution of the House of Lords (Bishops)

Mr. Richard Holt accordingly presented a Bill to amend the constitution of the House of Lords in relation to membership of bishops and to make consequential provision: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 May and to be printed. [Bill 87.]

Royal Assent

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Atomic Energy Authority Act 1986.

Opposition Day

[8th Allotted Day]

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. As we are running somewhat late and as there are many right hon. and hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate, may I call for short speeches.

4.27 pm

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): I beg to move,

That this House regrets Her Majesty's Government's support for the Strategic Defence Initiative.

In some ways the strategic defence initiative is probably the most important issue in the field of foreign and defence policy, disarmament and high technology that the House has discussed for many years. Its supporters and opponents will at least agree on that.

On 23 March 1983, President Reagan made a speech in which he asked for a fundamental change in the basic policy upon which western security has been built since the second world war. He made this speech without any consultation with any of his allies, although NATO's nuclear planning group was meeting at that time. He said that the

"human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations by threatening their existence . . . peace could not rest much longer on the threat of mutual suicide."

The President dedicated himself to produce a defence against nuclear ballistic missiles which would make:

"nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete."

Later in Baltimore, he told schoolchildren that "the hand of providence" inspired that speech.

The President never explained how ballistic missile defence would protect the world against nuclear bombs which were carried on aircraft, such as those dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, by cruise missiles, by individuals or in the hold of ships. He never explained how abolishing nuclear weapons would control conventional forces, which in an all-out war could inflict horrific damage, or how he could achieve any of his objectives without reducing the political tensions that have been the cause of the arms race. However, we can all agree that at least it was a noble vision, which has been endorsed by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

The strategic defence initiative that we are now discussing is very different from what President Reagan proposed nearly three years ago. The American Administration now say that the purpose of research is not to replace nuclear deterrence but to enhance it—to make the mutual suicide pact even more binding than it is today, and to threaten the survival of other nations more effectively. It is already clear that the Administration's aim for the next 30 years at least will be to protect not the peoples of the world, but American land-based missiles, which are one of the components in America's strategic nuclear triad.

"For the foreseeable future,"

the official American apologia for SDI now recounts,

"offensive nuclear forces, and the prospect of nuclear retaliation will remain the key element of deterrence."

Therefore, simultaneously with SDI, the United States Government are beginning to deploy a whole arsenal of new strategic nuclear weapons—the MX missile, the D5 submarine-launched missile and the Midgetman mobile missile. They foresee an immense increase in funding for research and development into what they call advanced strategic missile systems, which are a new arsenal of weapons that will enter service in the late 1990s when the first strategic defence is planned to be available. That must mean a stupendous acceleration of the arms race, greatly increasing the risk of nuclear war and making disarmament more difficult.

Indeed, the case against the President's present proposals was made most eloquently by the President in his original speech when he said:

"If defensive systems were paired with offensive systems they could be regarded as fostering an aggressive policy, and nobody really wants that."

The point that the combination of defence and offensive forces would appear to increase the possibility of a first strike against an enemy was repeated by him in his interview with Soviet journalists only last October, when he pointed out that it would make a first strike more feasible. The point was put most dramatically by ex-President Nixon when he said of the SDI:

"Such systems would be destabilising if they provided a shield so that you could use the sword."

That is the basic case against the attempt to produce a ballistic missile defence, which is the purpose of the SDI.

It is not surprising that the SDI has been opposed in a somewhat coded way, not only by our Foreign Secretary in his remarkable speech in the middle of last year, for which I paid him tribute, but by two of the past three American Presidents—Presidents Carter and Ford—three of the past four American Defence Secretaries — Secretaries Brown, Schlesinger and McNamara—and all six of the surviving American Defence Secretaries who are opposed to breaking the ABM treaty, which would be necessary if a star wars system were to be deployed.

Faced with that threat which, to use President Reagan's words, could make a first strike by the United States more likely, it is not surprising that the Soviet Government have made it clear that they will not sit on their hands. If SDI proceeds, they will increase the number of offensive missiles in the hope of swamping American defences, as the United Stated did by introducing multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles when the Russians first began deploying ballistic missile defences in the late 1960s, and, as Secretary Schlesinger, in a powerful article attacking SDI, pointed out, as any Western Government would do in similar circumstances. Indeed, the Chevaline programme, which was introduced by the Conservative Government in the early 1970s, was introduced as a response to the Soviet deployment of an ABM system around Moscow.

That is not the only Soviet reponse. The Soviet Government will also seek to develop weapons which would either put the American space-based system out of action—the most likely weapon for that would be some sort of space bomb which would circle the world permanently — or make the system ineffective, for example by introducing fast burn into their intercontinental missiles so that the boost phase, which is the first target of the American system, would be reduced from five minutes to 50 seconds, and would take place entirely in the atmosphere, which it is much more difficult for the

[Mr. Denis Healey]

proposed American laser weapons to penetrate. Finally, the Russians have made it clear that they would plan to develop their own space-based defensive systems.

Dr. Alan Glyn (Windsor and Maidenhead): I have listened carefully to the right hon. Gentleman and I agree with him. But he has not mentioned the time scale for the development of the SDI by the Americans.

Mr. Healey: From discussions with General Abrahamson and others I understand that the Americans hope to start deploying some sort of ballistic missile defence within about 10 years, although the first system may be based on land rather than in space. The fact that the Americans are known to be researching into such systems makes it sensible for the Russians to start preparing against them now, just as western countries, faced with the possibility of Soviet systems, immediately started taking action either to swamp them or copy them.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham) *rose*——

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North) *rose*——

Mr. Healey: I shall give way from time to time, but I do not wish to conduct a seminar. I have no doubt that you, Mr. Speaker, will note the anxiety of hon. Members to speak.

American official sources have made it clear that in the next 10 years, if the arms race proceeds, the Soviet Union will be able to increase the number of its missiles much faster than the United States simply by keeping existing production lines open. Indeed, it could increase the number of its warheads from about 9,000 to 30,000 within 10 years, especially if the United States abandons the SALT II agreement, which would restrict the number of missiles, as the American Defence Department has asked the President to do.

Even that is not the full horror of the prospect before us. The United States has now admitted that it is examining the possibility of putting nuclear weapons into orbit to use as pumps for X-ray lasers. It has already carried out many tests for that purpose on its testing grounds in Nevada. It is already exploring nuclear weapons as an element in its SDI, although earlier it always said that the SDI would be an entirely conventional system.

We must never lose sight of the fact that the technologies that are now under examination could be used for offensive as well as defensive purposes. In response to papers produced by several American university teams, a spokesman for the American strategic defence initiative has already admitted that any laser weapon powerful enough to destroy a missile in the atmosphere could, with some redesigning, be used to incinerate a city. Even the non-nuclear lasers contemplated by the United States could produce climatic effects as horrific and catastrophic to humanity as the nuclear winter — a concept with which people are now becoming familiar.

Faced with that terrifying prospect, any European Government should be using all their efforts to stop the arms race from entering that new phase while there is still time. Despite the publicly expressed hostility of the French Government to the SDI, and despite the deep and public divisions in the German Government about the SDI, the British Prime Minister decided to jump the gun on all her European allies and not only to endorse the programme but to offer to put British scientists at its disposal.

The Prime Minister sought to justify that sell-out by two arguments. First, she told us that the President gave her satisfactory undertakings at their meeting in December 1984 on the deployment of a space-based system. The second argument was that it was impossible to monitor an agreement to ban research into such a system. However, it is already clear that the American Administration have not the slightest intention of honouring three out of the four undertakings that they gave to the Prime Minister in Washington 14 months ago.

The first condition was that America would seek not to achieve superiority but to maintain the balance of strategic forces. On 1 February 1984, Secretary Weinberger told Congress:

"If we get a system . . . which we know can render their weapons impotent, we would be back in a situation we were in, for example, when we were the only nation with the nuclear weapon."

He considered SDI as effectively giving the United States the monopoly that it had in 1945. That is not maintaining a balance in strategic forces.

Secondly, the President undertook that the deployment of a system related to the SDI — in view of the obligations that America accepted under the ABM treaty —would have to be a matter for negotiation with the Soviet Government as a fellow signatory of the ABM treaty, and with America's allies. President Reagan was clear about the matter. On 6 November last year, in answer to questions, he said that if Russia did not agree to amend the ABM treaty to permit the deployment of a space-based defence system, he would go ahead and deploy it anyway. When asked by journalists whether he would permit the Soviet Government a veto on deployment, he said, "Hell, no."

Mr. Weinberger made the same point in less colourful language. A year ago he stated:

"I am ruling out the possibility of giving up on strategic defence, either in the research stage or if it becomes feasible in the deployment stage."

He refused to give up the possibility of deploying SDI under any circumstances if it proved feasible.

As the House will recall, it was that refusal even to consider negotiations that blocked all progress at the recent Geneva summit on disarmament of strategic nuclear forces. That in turn makes nonsense of the fourth undertaking, that East-West negotiations should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides.

Both sides are now planning to increase greatly the number of their offensive systems and to increase new types of defensive weapons. There is no chance of progress on strategic nuclear disarmament unless the United States is prepared to negotiate about the abandonment of the strategic defence initiative. The tragedy is that that has become clear just at the time when the new Soviet proposals for disarmament — perhaps engendered to some extent by the fear of the SDI deployment—represent major concessions in the Soviet position, not least on intermediate nuclear forces, where the Soviets have accepted the zero option, which was first put to the Russians by my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) and myself when we met Mr. Brezhnev in 1981. It was also put forward by President Reagan on behalf of NATO in discussions with

the Soviet Union about a year later. Since the war there has never been a time when the prospects for progress on disarmament have been more propitious. There is now a real chance of doing that to which the American and Soviet Governments committed themselves when Mr. Shultz and Mr. Gromyko agreed a year ago to end the arms race on earth and to prevent an arms race in space.

The Prime Minister's excuse for supporting the SDI as a research programme is that it is impossible to monitor or verify a ban on research and that the Soviet Union is carrying out research into ballistic missile defence in any case. As I pointed out when we previously debated this subject during the debate on the Queen's Speech in November, although research carried on inside people's heads or inside laboratories is impossible to monitor without access to those laboratories, such research cannot go far without physical tests, or "demonstrations" as the Americans call them. Tests of components in a possible system that take place outside laboratories can be monitored by satelite photography and other means and are continuously monitored by the American and Soviet Governments at present. The Russians have at last offered to draw a distinction between research in laboratories and brains and the type of tests outside laboratories that can be monitored, without which such research cannot proceed very far.

The Americans have listed such tests as having been carried out by the Russians. They have described some of the preparations that they say the Russians are making to produce a ballistic missile defence. However, I understand that their interpretation of the Krasnoyarsk radar—their prime exhibit—is not shared by the British Government. I hope that the Secretary of State will come clean on that matter in his reply. Evidence given to the Defence Committee by some officials made it clear that we do not endorse the American interpretation of Krasnoyarsk. The Russians have agreed to dismantle the Krasnoyarsk system if Britain dismantles similar systems at Fylingdales and Thule. Many people believe that they are as contrary to the ABM system as is the Krasnoyarsk radar.

Mr. Michael Heseltine (Henley): The right hon. Gentleman was responsible for many years for Fylingdales. Was it part of an ABM system?

Mr. Healey: No, it was not then, but the right hon. Gentleman and his Government agreed to develop Fylingdales as a phased array radar of a type very similar to that at Krasnoyarsk. That is a new development which the Russians have already claimed is contrary to the ABM treaty, on exactly the same grounds as the Americans claim that Krasnoyarsk is contrary to the treaty. I am glad to see that the right hon. Gentleman does not dispute that fact.

Mr. Heseltine: Perhaps I would if the right hon. Gentleman gave me the chance. I was deeply involved in the matter. The purpose of the modernised Fylingdales is no different from the purpose over which the right hon. Gentleman presided.

Mr. Healey: That is precisely what the Russians argue about Krasnoyarsk: that its purpose is to track objects in space, not to—*[Interruption.]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would love to conduct a seminar because I know that education and instruction is widely required by Conservative Members.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood) *rose*——

Mr. Healey: No, I have dealt with the question of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine)——

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman is getting carried away. The essential difference is that Fylingdales existed before the ABM treaty and Krasnoyarsk did not.

Mr. Healey: Of course Fylingdales existed before the treaty, but it is being developed in a way that is incompatible with the treaty. That is precisely the complaint made by the Soviet Government. If the right hon. Gentleman is sensitive about his complicity in the matter, and if he believes, like the Americans, that the Krasnoyarsk radar violates the treaty, let the British Government agree to the Soviet proposal to cease development at Fylingdales, Krasnoyarsk and Thule, which seem to be a perfectly sensible proposal that would not harm Western security and would relieve many people of what I believe to be legitimate anxieties.

If the West is really worried about Soviet research into ballistic missile defence or anti-satellite systems, where in some respects the Soviet Union is further advanced than the United States, it could kill those systems stone dead by accepting a ban on observable tests. None of the Government's excuses for supporting such tests hold the slightest amount of water, since they are fully capable of being monitored.

The strategic defence initiative has become the major obstacle to stopping the arms race. It is widely agreed that it would be possible with existing means to monitor a comprehensive test ban, especially since the Soviet Government have agreed to on-site inspection. But the SDI requires nuclear tests underground of X-ray laser bombs, some of which have already been carried out in Nevada. Mr. Miller, a top scientist at Livermore, has argued in public that even the non-nuclear components of the proposed SDI require testing in a nuclear environment which can be produced only by the explosion of nuclear weapons.

The tragedy is that this opportunity to stop the arms race may be the last unless we can pop this genie back in the bottle now. What must worry many hon. Members is that the major obstacle to a reduction in strategic weapons is the American attachment to the SDI, just as the major obstacle to accepting the Soviet proposal for the zero option on intermediate nuclear forces is the British Government's determination to go ahead with the Trident programme, although there is growing opposition even in the services to continuing that programme, since, as the right hon. Member for Henley will recall, one reason why our forces cannot afford helicopters produced by Westland is that, in a few years' time, 30 per cent. of the new equipment budget will be taken up by Trident.

Her Majesty's Government and the American Government together have erected a massive road block on the way to peace. All this has been compounded during the past few months by the grubby conspiracy of the British Government to encourage British scientists to leave vital British programmes of civilian research, such as the Alvey programme, and work instead on SDI research for the American Government. It is yet another sell-out to American pressure — one of vital importance to the future of British industry.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) will deal at greater length with some problems surrounding the agreement made by the Secretary of State

[Mr. Healey]

for Defence, which General Abrahamson was pursuing during his recent visit to London. I hope that he will tell us a little more about the agreement, since I understand that he met General Abrahamson yesterday.

The memorandum of understanding that the Government signed with America on this matter is scarcely worth the paper on which it is written, because such memoranda can be overridden at any time by the American Congress, as Congress overrode the wartime agreement to share nuclear technology when it passed the McMahon Act, and as the Americans overrode another agreement when they cancelled the Skybolt project on which an earlier Conservative Government were relying to replace the aging V bombers. As the right hon. Member for Henley may remember, a few years ago, the Americans unilaterally broke the memorandum of understanding to produce an airfield attack weapon, the JP233. Indeed, it may have been before his time. That memorandum was signed by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) whom he has joined on the Government Back Benches. They seem to be a depository for former Defence Ministers.

But even if the memorandum of understanding is not overridden by the United States, it is vital that the House should know what its provisions are. We know only one thing about the memorandum: that the former Secretary of State completely failed in his stated objective to guarantee $1,500 million-worth of work for Britain. We must rely entirely on leaks, most of which are coming from the United States. However, some have come from the familiar source—the Department of Trade and Industry —which let it be known during the negotiation of the agreement that it was unhappy about the right hon. Gentleman's failure to obtain satisfactory assurances on intellectual property rights and on technology transfer.

Connoisseurs of British politics will be intrigued by the fact that there was what psychologists call role-reversal on that occasion. The right hon. Member for Henley was trying to sell out to the Americans, and his comrade in adversity, the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, was trying to protect European technology. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that circumstances alter cases, although I found his posing as a great European odd when I considered his record on the memorandum of understanding on the SDI and his position on the purchase of the Trident missile.

We have been told by leaks that the Department of Trade and Industry was immensely unhappy about the provision to enable British scientists to use the knowledge which they acquire in this research and to produce products which can be transferred to other countries in commercial sale.

No information is available to the House about the provisions. There are no military security grounds for denying the House this information, and there is every reason for its having the information. Is it the case, as one of the American leaks has claimed, that intellectual property rights and technology transfer will have to be settled case by case in company-to-company contracts, and therefore the British Government have acquired no guarantees whatever in this field which will protect British interests?

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany have said in advance—they have not yet signed the memorandum of understanding — that they will not cough up any of their own money. One of the leaks I have read says that Her Majesty's Government have agreed to provide one third of the money for any Government-to-Government contracts from the British Treasury. That is a matter of immense importance to the House. Hon. Members have every reason to be told the truth, yet we are denied it.

We are also told that there are penal cancellation clauses in this agreement in an attempt to bind any future Government to implement its provisions. I am certain that any future House of Commons will demand the same right as the American Congress has often exercised, to override a memorandum of understanding about which it has been given no information whatever.

The central issue on this agreement is a general and simple one. We all know that Britain has a substantial lead over the United States in some of the new technologies, particularly those relating to fifth and sixth generation computers which, it is hoped, will have artificial intelligence and be capable of learning. It is essential—I hope the right hon. Member for Henley agrees, in the light of his recent speeches—that we should use this unique advantage in high technology to build a European base so that Europe can compete on equal terms in these areas with the United States and Japan.

We should not sell out to the United States, and particularly to American defence interests from which there will be only a small commercial spin-off, even if we are allowed under the agreement to make use of the spin-off. I noticed the other day that the assistant head of research at IBM, who can be regarded as a fairly independent authority on these matters, says that the right word is not "spin-off", but "drip-off." The amount of commercial advantage which even the Americans will get out of this diversion of research and development from civilian to military research will be small compared to the colossal resources which it is planned to invest in it.

In an earlier debate my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said that to make these points is not to be anti-American; it is anti-British not to make them. It is time that this Government got off their hind legs and started putting Britain first. The Prime Minister and the Government as a whole have shown a feckless indifference to British interests. That has characterised the whole of their industrial policy, which we have been debating at length in recent weeks, and it threatens the very survival of the manufacturing side of our economy. Feckless indifference to the interests of peace by supporting the SDI is even more dangerous.

I ask the House to vote for the motion. At least it is one means of stopping the sell-out to American pressure which is corrupting every area of our public life, both at home and abroad.

4.56 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. George Younger): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'takes note of the extensive Soviet research effort in ballistic missile defence; agrees that the Strategic Defence Initiative research programme is prudent in the light of this effort; and welcomes the participation of United Kingdom industry and research institutions in that programme.'.

Until the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) got well into his speech I was somewhat puzzled

by the vague and indeterminate nature of the motion that he put down for today's debate. I now see that it has provided an excellent and perfect background for the splendid extravaganza with which he has delighted us, and it has given him plenty of scope to paint a colourful picture of his own that bears little relationship to the facts. Having built up that picture, he spectacularly knocked it down with one flick of his wrist.

I should prefer to spell out as clearly as I can the facts about where we start in this important debate and why the Government have taken the line they have about their particpation in the research activity associated with the SDI programme. As the House will know, the central purpose of British security policy over the last 40 years has been to maintain deterrence within a framework of stability in international relations. This basic approach has stood the test of time, and it is the approach that provides the surest road to continued peace, but on whichever side of the House we sit we must recognise that neither time nor technology will stand still.

As circumstances change, and as new technical horizons are opened, we must be ready to review the way in which we execute our basic policy and, if necessary, to make adjustments to take account of the new situations in which we find ourselves. There is nothing radical, extraordinary or new about that. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East played a valuable role, which I well remember, in the debates that resulted in the reformulation of the basic NATO strategy in the 1960s. Those debates, resulting in the policy of flexible response, reflected the fact that circumstances had changed since the 1950s when nuclear weapons had first come to play a central role in the security policies of the NATO Alliance. The Alliance properly took account of the changed situation and the strategy which emerged provided a sound basis for Alliance policy thereafter. In my view it has done so, and will continue to do so for many years to come.

The debate about the strategic defence initiative is about a further evolution in our strategic thinking to take account of changes since then, both in the scale and capability of offensive nuclear forces and in the technologies available for possible defences.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Secretary of State agree that, unlike previous systems, there is no way in which this system can be tested? What reply has the right hon. Gentleman to those at the department of artifical intelligence in Edinburgh and at Imperial college who say that, in the absence of a spare planet, this system—which involves space-controlled automatic weapons—can never be tested? That is the difference. It is not evolution at all.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Gentleman is entitled to his view on that, and so, indeed, is Dr. Thompson, whom he has often quoted. Dr. Thompson has his views on the matter, but it is worth noting that after he expressed his views, Edinburgh university made it clear that they were not necessarily the views of the university, but were Dr. Thompson's personal views. I have no objection to that. If the hon. Gentleman listens to my argument as a whole, he will get an answer to the whole question of the rationale of why we have to take account of the reality of what is happening, and not the situation as we might wish it to be.

The essential question is whether defensive systems have a role to play in maintaining deterrence and ensuring strategic stability, or whether we should continue to deter strategic nuclear attack solely by the threat of retaliation. This issue is, of course, not new. Both the USA and the USSR worked on defensive systems in the late 1960s. It became clear that the technology then available would not provide cost-effective defences against the weight of attack which the super powers could pose against each other. The right hon. Gentleman touched on that point. Both sides accepted a different twin-pronged approach —numerical constraints on offensive sytems, coupled with strict limits on defensive deployments. That resulted in the signature of the 1972 SALT I and ABM treaties. Each side relied for its security against strategic nuclear attack on the threat of retaliation from its own nuclear forces, which were themselves virtually immune from pre-emptive attack.

Those treaties have provided the strategic framework under which we have lived ever since. They make up the concept known as mutual assured destruction or, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs more accurately and realistically described it, mutual assured deterrence. The Government attach great importance to the integrity of the SALT and ABM treaties, which marked a real achievement in an agreed approach to ensuring a stable and peaceful world.

It follows that we believe that their terms should be strictly complied with by all the parties to them. That is why we very much welcomed the US commitment to pursue its SDI research programme in accordance with a strict interpretation of the ABM treaty and not to undercut the unratified SALT II agreement as long as the Soviet Union exercised equal restraint.

It is, of course, entirely to be expected—indeed, it is all too typical—that the focus of the Opposition motion should be on the United States strategic defence initiative. We shall hear much today—we have already from the right hon. Gentleman—of how it is the United States that is upsetting the approach agreed in the 1970s. We shall, perhaps, be left with the impression from some speakers that the Soviet Union, on the other hand, has respected that approach and wants nothing to do with strategic defences. The reality is very different.

It is demonstrably not the case that the Soviet Union has eschewed the possibility of strategic defences. It was the Soviet Union that chose to make full use of the provision for the limited deployment of such systems permitted under the ABM treaty by deploying an ABM system around Moscow — a system which it is currently modernising and expanding to the extent allowed by that treaty. In the days when those on the Opposition Benches were still being really serious about defence, it was precisely that Soviet deployment that led them — responsibly and properly — to proceed with the Chevaline programme for our strategic nuclear deterrent. The right hon. Gentleman's famous memory was not quite correct today. Although it was a Conservative Government who decided to go ahead with Chevaline, it was a Labour Government who made the arrangements and allocated funding. He cannot get away from that.

Perhaps this limited ABM deployment might at first have been explained away as a hangover from the earlier Soviet R and D effort in the 1960s, but it is now being upgraded. Above all, we have to address the long-standing Soviet research programmes into the range of technologies

[Mr. Younger]

relevant to ballistic missile defence — lasers, particle beam and radio frequency weapons, kinetic energy weapons, surveillance and target detection and so on.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces placed in the Library on 26 November 1985 a paper on that Soviet programme, which I commend to the House and to hon. Members who have not read it. The facts that it sets out are, I believe, not in dispute. The key point is that this is not a new Soviet programme; it is not a response to the SDI — far from it, it long pre-dates it—it is not something peripheral to the Soviet effort in defence research; it is a key component of it.

Mr. Healey: Of course the Russians have been carrying out that research. Indeed, the right hon. Gentleman has confirmed that their research experiments have been monitored by means available to the West—just as the Russians monitor ours. Therefore, a ban on observable tests would be feasible.

Has the United States not been spending money in that area, at least since 1965? It did not stop after the signing of the ABM treaty; it did not have to. Indeed, this is the first year of its research into those systems when spending has risen above the average for those years—the second year of SDI. Both sides have been pursuing research in those areas, but neither had even conceived the possibility of developing the sort of system in which the Americans are now engaged.

Mr. Younger: I cannot agree with the right hon. Gentleman. He is using the same technique as he used earlier. It is no part of my case to say that the Soviet Union has been investigating these matters but the United States has not. I have not said that, I do not believe that, and I do not think that it is a tenable position. Nor is it any part of my case that either the Soviet Union or the United States is, at this stage, intending to go beyond anything allowed by the ABM treaty. Research is, of course, allowed under that treaty.

I am making the case—and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree with it — that there is no ground for saying that the Soviet Union has not been investigating the whole question of strategic defence. It has been doing so, and it is doing so. It is also suggested that the United States may be doing so.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is it not true that official published American sources from the highest quarters of the Government have made it clear that the Soviet Union is spending more than 50 per cent. of its budget on strategic defence systems? The largeness of its armoury in offensive systems makes us realise how great is its commitment to strategic defence systems.

Mr. Younger: My hon. Friend is right. We have made that point clear. It is now agreed between both sides—which is important to my argument — that both the Soviet Union and the United States of America have been indulging in that form of research. They have not even contended that they are not doing so. It is not a peripheral matter—it is a key component of what the Soviet Union is doing.

The explanation for that is, I believe, self-evident. The Soviet Union wishes to explore the scope that new technologies might offer for an effective, active defence of the Soviet homeland against nuclear attack—defence against ballistic missiles which would complement the substantial effort which, unlike the West, the Soviet Union has already been putting into civil defence and defence against aircraft.

Let me emphasise that I am not arguing that the Soviet Union is about to deploy such a defence or that there is an intention at this time to do so in the future. It is, perhaps, simply a question of it keeping its options open. What is incontrovertible is that the Soviet Union has not accepted for all time the existing relationship between offensive and defensive forces at the nuclear level.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): Will the right hon. Gentleman address his mind to the statement by the President of the United States on 23 March 1983, that if research went ahead and reached fruition the United States would be willing to share the fruits with the Soviet Union?

Mr. Younger: Indeed, that is one of the remarks made by the President. However, that is not the subject of our debate, which is on whether it is right, or wrong, for the United Kingdom to participate in the research programme associated with SDI. With great respect to the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, a large part of what he said this afternoon was addressed not precisely to that question, but to the possible results of a complete deployment and development of weapons systems which might or might not result from future research into that sort of technology.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State has just repeated the crux of his argument — that today we are dealing purely with the research programme. Does he accept the point made by the Home Secretary, that research programmes tend to take on their own unstoppable momentum? Therefore, is it not appropriate that we should examine the possible consequences of such research programmes?

Mr. Younger: That is appropriate. There is nothing wrong with looking forward to that, but it is not appropriate to make the assumption that because the research programme has finished and has proved it can do certain things, we can proceed with development and deployment. It has been made clear that not only is that miles off in time, but that it may never happen. In any case, neither we nor the United States would intend to do anything without consultation with allies and negotiations with the Soviet Union. That is a clear dividing line which we must have before us when we consider the big issues which are raised by the whole matter.

Mr. Healey: Does the right hon. Gentleman not take seriously the statement by both President Reagan and Secretary Weinberger that if they cannot get the Russians to agree to change the ABM treaty they plan to deploy in any case? Does he not take that threat seriously? Is it not inconsistent with the undertaking given to the Prime Minister in December 1984?

Mr. Younger: I thought that that was fairly well answered in the television programme in which the right hon. Gentleman appeared on Sunday. It was in answer to a question that the President made that remark. He was being asked whether, if the whole thing fell apart and the Russians refused to discuss the matter, he would just roll over on his back and say, "I cannot negotiate further." In any event, the right hon. Gentleman knows very well that that is a well-known debating trick. He is trying to draw

a conclusion from asking the old question, "When did you stop beating your wife?" If the President had given another answer he would have gone into any negotiation which might eventually take place, having given away every card in the pack. The right hon. Gentleman knows that and must accept it.

How then should the West react to the Soviet effort which we, like the right hon. Gentleman, believe is in existence? Should we bury our heads in the sand and pretend that it does not exist?

Should we at the other extreme decide now to abandon the existing concept of mutual deterrence which, as I have said, has served us well? The answer surely is that we, too, should explore these technologies and that we, too, should address, just as the Russians do, the benefits and the drawbacks of alternative approaches to strategy. That is precisely the approach which the British Government have adopted in addressing the implications of the strategic defence initiative.

The strategic defence initiative is not a strategy or an operational concept which is about to be implemented. It is a research programme looking at the feasibility of developing cost-effective strategic defences. It is above all a prudent hedge against the substantial Soviet activity which I have just described. It is for that reason that the Government support the SDI research programme. It would be irresponsible to do otherwise.

As for the outcome of SDI research—an outcome which will not be apparent for many years—neither the United States nor the United Kingdom Government have formed or could form at this stage any judgment. Indeed, it would be premature to do so. We do not know, nor can we know, what sort of results will emerge, or what sort of conclusions might be reached. The United States Government have made it clear that they have no preconceived notions about the defensive options the research may generate and that they would not proceed to development and deployment unless the research were to indicate that defences met strict criteria of survivability and cost-effectiveness. Even then they would do so only after close consultation with their allies and negotiations with the Soviet Union.

There has already been much debate on both sides of the Atlantic about the possibilities for placing a greater reliance on defensive rather than offensive systems. That debate will certainly continue, and it is right that it should. The issues are of paramount importance. For our part, the Government believe that the current structure of mutual deterrence provides a sound and effective basis for providing that degree of stability in international relations which is an essential prerequisite to continuing peace and security.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that he is making basic assumption throughout his whole argument that the concept of deterrence is somehow a stable concept? In reality, throughout the development of weapons systems has there not been an in-built tendency to make the systems much more sophisticated? Is not the latest SDI research programme yet another contribution to the instability of deterrence itself? Is not the combination of a defensive system and an offensive system making invalid the mutual deterrence which he has projected?

Mr. Younger: I am not sure on which side of the argument the hon. Gentleman is. We are discussing the development of a defensive system and whether that destabilises the balance that we have been used to. The deterrent system that we have been following has secured an acceptable balance for some time. Of course, anyone with such systems will try to modernise them and make them more sophisticated. The question is, do we ignore that and pretend that it does not happen, or do we take our part in it to try to keep the balance of deterrence which is so important?

Any step towards changing that essential framework should be taken only after all the implications have been fully thought through and carefully weighed. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs outlined in his lecture to the Royal United Services Institute last year the issues which need to be addressed.

The Government's approach continues to be guided by the four points which were agreed by the President and the Prime Minister at their meeting at Camp David in December 1984 to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. First, the United States and Western aim is not to achieve superiority, but to maintain balance, taking account of Soviet developments. Secondly, SDI-related deployment would, in view of treaty obligations, have to be a matter for negotiation. Thirdly, the aim is to enhance, not to undermine, deterrence. Lastly, East-West negotiation should aim to achieve security with reduced levels of offensive systems on both sides.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The right hon. Gentleman has stressed the defensive nature of the SDI. Has he read the report by R and D Associates of Los Angeles, which is an influential think tank on defence matters? It made the point that laser weapons being developed as part of the SDI are more likely to be used to incinerate enemy cities than to defend cities in the United States.

Mr. Younger: The hon. Lady will perhaps read in *Hansard* that her right hon. Friend mentioned that. The only point I make is that presumably that might be examined. The question is not whether that happens, but whether we have any control over it. That is the key point.

From the four points that I have outlined it will be seen that the Government attach great weight to the arms control implications of strategic research and possible deployments on both sides. Whatever the eventual outcome of such research, it is clear that, for the foreseeable future, Western security will depend upon the maintenance of nuclear deterrent forces. The immediate task, therefore, is to try to get reductions in the levels of these forces while maintaining strategic stability. That is the Western aim at the negotiations in Geneva.

The Soviet Union, however, continues to seek to hold agreement in this central area of strategic reductions hostage to a ban on the SDI, or a ban on space strike arms, as it terms it. The Soviet Union has mounted a major campaign to try to cast doubt on the motivation behind the SDI, notwithstanding its own research activities in related fields, and to foster alarm in the West about the consequences of pursuing it. We have seen these scare tactics before, over cruise missiles prior to their deployment in 1983. We have seen the benefits which a firm response can bring. We will continue to take a more balanced view, and will encourage the Soviet Union to do the same.

[Mr. Younger]

Research work on ballistic missile defence will continue on both sides as it has since the 1960s. Nothing that we say today will alter that. There is no reason why this work has to be a stumbling block to arms control agreements if both sides do not wish it to be so. The United States has made it clear that the SDI research programme will be conducted in full conformity with the provisions of the anti-ballistic missile treaty. The United States has also made it clear that if SDI research yields positive results it would, after consulting the allies, consult and negotiate with the Soviet Union, in accordance with the terms of the ABM treaty, on how deterrence could be enhanced through a greater reliance by both sides on defensive systems.

If the Soviet Government want more certainty before committing themselves to arms reductions, they should take up the United States' invitation to discuss in the Geneva negotiations the relationship of offensive and defensive systems. In this way, each side could establish sufficient confidence in each other's intentions and in the framework of their security relationship to enable mutual reductions to be made in their massive strategic arsenals. The right way forward is through such discussions, but so far the Soviet Government have refused to go down this path.

It is within the framework of the four points, including our clear commitment to strategic stability and to arms control, that the British Government have viewed the question of participation in SDI research. As I have pointed out, this research, on both sides, covers technologies of relevance not just to ballistic missile defence. It embraces technologies which will be widely applicable in the battlefield of the future. Neither the British Government, nor our high technology companies, could afford to stand apart from such research. Nor have they done so. Within our defence research establishments and within other research institutions outside the Government, work has been under way in areas relevant to the SDI because these are areas relevant to our own defence effort and to the civil economy in the future.

We could have chosen as a Government to stand aside altogether from the SDI. Had we done so, we would have forgone the opportunity of an information exchange with the United States of immense potential benefit to our future defence programme. We could have abandoned the approach of Anglo-American defence co-operation which, under successive Governments, has served us so well. We could not, of course, have prevented British companies or universities from participating in the SDI if they had wished to do so, but they would inevitably have had to do so solely on United States' terms.

Instead, we have chosen the path of regulating and formalising our participation in a way which will provide a substantial opportunity for British companies and institutions to compete on equal terms with their United States counterparts. This was the approach enshrined in the memorandum of understanding signed by my predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), and Mr. Caspar Weinberger in December. This memorandum and the detailed agreements under it set out procedures for the participation of British institutions in United States funded work in a way which enables them also to use the fruits of this work for our benefit. It also facilitates a wider information exchange. Of course — and properly — it provides arrangements to safeguard security on both sides where this is necessary. It would be quite wrong and wholly unrealistic to proceed otherwise.

The United States Administration have emphasised their wish that there should be substantial British participation in United States-funded work. While they can provide no guarantees of the scale of our participation, their commitment is clear. What is now needed is a response for British companies, with the help of the British Government, fully to exploit this opportunity. We for our part have established within the Government an office to support SDI participation. We are anxious to work in partnership with industry and I am delighted that a presentation this week on opportunities for participation was over-subscribed twofold. It is early days in the programme, but some contracts have already been placed, including two in optical computing. Discussions are well advanced on a wide range of further opportunities for early British participation in the programme.

I maintain that the Government's approach is firmly based on the reality of the present situation—the reality of the need to take account of Soviet actions as well as of Soviet public statements and the reality of the need to take account of technologies which are not only of potential relevance to our future conventional defence effort but open up new possibilities, no more than that, for the relationship between strategic offence and defence in the long term. It is right that we should address those realities properly and fully, and it is right that we should ensure that this country has a research base capable of underpinning both its defence effort and the civil economy of the future.

It is inevitable, I suppose, that the Opposition should have sought to tackle these issues by focusing in a one-sided and anti-American way on the strategic defence initiative. If we were to follow their path, we should isolate ourselves from reality and weaken our capacity to work towards a safer and more secure world for all—both in the East and in the West. For those reasons, I urge the House most strongly to support the Government's amendment.

5.24 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): The Secretary of State for Defence has attempted to reply to the devastating opening speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey), but no one hearing both speeches could imagine that he has succeeded. The Secretary of State has not applied his mind to any of the immediate points that my right hon. Friend put to him. He has not attempted to explain why the understanding with the American Government about how British participation is to take place should remain secret. Nor has he explained why so many infringements have been permitted of the original terms agreed between the Prime Minister and the United States President. To the extent that he has sought to do so, it has been by repudiating the words of the United States President, who has said on a number of occasions, as have many of his supporters, that he intends to go ahead with the programme in any event.

If the claims for the strategic defence initiative programme were fundamentally correct, there would be a case for that claim, but the British Government clearly do not accept that. It seems that they still retain some fondness for the Foreign Secretary's criticisms of the original proposal. In this context, it would have been

proper for the Foreign Secretary himself to reply to the debate, just as the Government should properly have provided the time for this debate and for the Foreign Secretary to deal with the profound issues that he has emphasised. If the Foreign Secretary's criticism—it is no use trying to pretend that it was not criticism—of, for example, the impossibility of making a distinction between research and development because if the research went ahead the pressure for development would become overwhelming was a substantial criticism, it remains so today.

The Government have not made the slightest effort to discuss in the House or in the country the serious arguments made not just by the Opposition but by the Foreign Secretary himself. That speech by the Foreign Secretary was widely regarded as a most valuable contribution to the debate. I wonder whether that debate was transferred to the Cabinet or whether it followed the course so frequently adopted by the present Administration whereby major issues which should be debated in Cabinet are hurried through, hushed up or pushed into secret agreements so that debate in Cabinet and in the House is prevented.

The whole way in which the Government have dealt with these matters exposes their failure to discuss the issues in the country. At times, the Secretary of State for Defence talks as though the strategic defence initiative is just a minor logical development of what has gone before, but everyone knows that it is something quite different. The American President and Defence Secretary have presented it as something quite different. That being so, the whole matter should have been debated in the House. The only contribution that the Secretary of State for Defence has made will be to ensure that the discussion will proceed on very many future occasions.

The Secretary of State for Defence talks about reality and the way in which the Opposition approach these matters. I wish to make only a short speech, but I should like to quote at some length the comments that have been made about this, brought up to date not by the Opposition —although they vindicate all that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East has said—but by Lord Zuckerman, chief scientific adviser to the British Government for several years and a man whose integrity, intelligence and copious knowledge of these matters no one has ever dared to question. He probably knows more about combined military, defence and scientific implications than anyone else on the face of the planet. He has always tried to give his views as clearly and openly as he as he can. He describes the reality of which the right hon. Gentleman spoke somewhat differently.

Lord Zuckerman has described how many of these matters featured in the debates that took place before the signature of the ABM treaty in 1972. One reason why Professor Zuckerman is so worried is that what is happening will destroy that treaty. Very few treaties prevent the world from going ahead full speed in the nuclear arms race. He is worried that the ABM treaty will be destroyed just as some of those treaties, such as the non-proliferation treaty or the comprehensive test ban treaty, are also in jeopardy. The American Government are injuring and tearing up the ABM treaty, and the British Government are helping them. All the right hon. Gentleman's pious words about his desire to sustain that treaty are disproved by the reality of what has happened.

What happened in 1972? They had a discussion about defensive systems. That is why they came to the ABM treaty and why it was so important. That process is described by Professor Zuckerman in a recent article. He wrote:

"The result was the ABM Treaty of 1972, a treaty that limited ABM deployment to two sites only—later changed to one—in each country. The treaty did not bar development work that improved the radars, computers, and defensive missiles deployed within the two sites, but specifically prohibited the development of any type of space-based ABM system. Stability was then the order of the political day."

It is that stability that is now being threatened and broken by the course recommended by the American Administration, which, tragically, is approved of by the British Government.

Professor Zuckerman examined the arguments. The main argument that has been put today, and which is incorporated in the Government amendment, is that the Russians have been doing it anyhow, so we should do it. If that were true in the precise terms in which they say it, it would be a very powerful argument. I have not the slightest doubt that the Government will rely on it to the maximum. That is why Professor Zuckerman, who knows a good deal more about these issues than the Government, has dealt with the matter. He says:

"One major justification continues to be heard: that the Russians are engaged on work that corresponds to different elements of the SDI program, and that in many ways they are ahead of the United States. We have also been told that some Russian actions have already breached the terms of the 1972 ABM Treaty. Specific violations are spelled out in impressive brochures.

The Russians counter by pointing to American actions which in their view are breaches of the treaty. They have even offered to suspend work on the much spoken of, and highly vulnerable, vast phased-array radar system which they are building at Krasnoyarsk if the United States abandons its program to modernize the radar complexes which it has at Fylingdales in the United Kingdom and Thule in Greenland. Their spokesman argue that these modernization plans, and particularly the rebuilding of Fylingdales as what is rumored to be a 360 degree phased-array radar complex, is far more questionable than what the USSR is doing at Krasnoyarsk."

This is Professor Zuckerman examining the facts—the realities to which the right hon. Gentleman referred. He continues:

"A further accusation by the administration is that the USSR has committed a far greater investment of plant space, capital, and manpower to advanced BMD technologies than the US has. This extravagant claim is not borne out by a CIA document about Soviet efforts which was presented to the Armed Services Committee of the Senate on June 26, 1985. Indeed, the document expresses doubt about the applicability of even a network of Krasnoyarsk systems—regarded as the most serious breach of the 1972 treaty — for widespread ABM deployment. Dr. Garwin, in a follow-up to testimony presented to a congressional study group on October 10, 1985, has also pointed out that the better part of the large Soviet program on strategic defense is devoted to the upgrading of its anti-aircraft defense system."

This is not a judgment given by a partial mind. It is given by Professor Zuckerman, and is concerned with developments that have already taken place. Of course he is horrified at the possibility that we shall see destroyed one of the very few treaties that works—the ABM treaty. The right hon. Gentleman said that he wants to preserve it. Professor Zuckerman continues:

"It was therefore unfortunate that immediately before the Geneva summit, Robert McFarlane, then the head of the National Security Council, declared that no aspect of the development of space-based BMD components is prohibited by the 1972 ABM Treaty, and that what was intended about testing and

[Mr. Michael Foot]

development merely implied a shift from the technology that was available at the beginning of the 1970s to what can be undertaken today."

What Professor Zuckerman underlines most of all in his article—indeed, it is the conclusion of his article—is that it is absurd, it is highly dangerous, for Britain, the United States and other Western countries to weaken the 1972 agreement, and to make it capable of more flexible interpretation. The amendment puts exactly such an interpretation on the treaty. Professor Zuckerman accuses the American Administration of weakening enormously the way in which the ABM treaty is applied and can be applied. If the SDI programme goes ahead, the ABM treaty will be torn up altogether.

This is the situation at which we have arrived. Professor Zuckerman concludes his article with some very serious words. There have not been so many treaties that guard against the pace of the nuclear arms race. There have not been so many treaties that have actually worked, but there have been a few and some of them are now threatened. Unless the British Government wake up and do something at the last moment, the comprehensive test ban treaty may go. The non-proliferation treaty is also threatened. The British Government do not appear to have done anything about that. The ABM treaty is now threatened, and the right hon. Gentleman's words will not do anything to protect that treaty, particularly if they conflict with the deeds — and the deeds are the signatures which the British Government put to the secret agreement with the United States. Why did they want the British Government to come along and sign on the dotted line? That has been used by the American Administration to support not only the first next step along the road, but the whole programme that they are seeking to carry through, which would involve the destruction of one of the very few treaties that guard against the renewal of the race in the most intemperate and dangerous manner.

Mr. Younger: Does the right hon. Gentleman's case not completely collapse when one recognises that the ABM treaty clearly and specifically and in so many words makes it clear that research is perfectly compatible with full adherence to that treaty?

Mr. Foot: The right hon. Gentleman should study what Professor Zuckerman has said. His advice is available to the Government——

Mr. Wilkinson: Read the treaty.

Mr. Foot: I will read the treaty. I will also read Professor Zuckerman's comment on this aspect of the treaty. I know that Conservative Members do not want to hear it. Here is the point about whether the treaty has been broken:

"Adhering to the strictest interpretation of that treaty has therefore become a vital consideration for all of us—not some so-called liberal intepretation of the way its terms were drafted, however legally argued, not some new version, as Gerard Smith has put it, but the treaty in the sense in which it was negotiated by the two sides. Were some demonstration test of a novel BMD component by either side to result in a unilateral breach, it would be but a short step to the abrogation of the few other treaties that have been so painfully negotiated in order to try to stem the spread of nuclear weapons."

The accusation that the Government are engaged in a breach of the 1972 treaty comes not only from the Opposition but also from Professor Zuckerman, and it is backed by supporting evidence that is available. It is an outrage of the first order that at such a critical moment in the world's history the British Government are more interested in money than in how new treaties are to be made. Money is the only thing that counts, and the Government are more interested in making a deal than in achieving a proper supranational agreement between nations that will stop the nuclear arms race altogether. The secret understanding that the Government have made—which will eventually be dragged out into the light of day —will not assist in obtaining a proper agreement. It is a dangerous and wicked diversion that will be exposed in the end.

5.41 pm

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) in a sense demeaned himself by suggesting that the Government have gone down this path solely because they are interested in money. That lowered the level of the debate to a deplorable standard.

This is an issue of the utmost importance, and there are sound and considerable reasons why a view may be taken on whether the right hon. Gentleman's argument is right or wrong. However, I am sure that money is not one of the reasons.

In that context, the Marshall Institute of the United States—a very respectable and independent organisation —in response to the question,

"Does SDI violate the ABM Treaty?"

said:

"SDI is a research program whose stated goal is research on ABM defenses. However, the ABM Treaty does not limit goals. It only limits certain activities. The Department of Defense experiment that successfully demonstrated the 'smart bullet' concept at Kwajalein last June was in accord with the ABM Treaty because the Treaty allows ABM tests from areas specified as missile test ranges and so designated by the parties. (Article III.) The United States has designated Kwajalein as a missile test range."

The Marshall Institute concludes—this is relevant to the argument of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent:

"We may bump up against the Treaty in three or four years —if, for example, we begin to test space-based components. But for the next several years there is no conflict between SDI and the ABM Treaty. The Soviet 'Star Wars' program will also bump up against the ABM Treaty soon. Some experts say it has already done so."

That is the answer to the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent.

There is an exception to almost every rule in life, and on this occasion I am happy to be able to say that I welcome the Leader of the Opposition's choice of subject for debate. Instead of the usual "Who done what and when" saga, we have an opportunity—alas, all too brief —to debate what is to my mind the most important decision facing the West today. Indeed, it faces both super-powers, because I also take the view that a fundamental Western interest is the survival of the Russian people as a whole long enough for them to understand, evaluate and eventually escape from the yoke of their self-imposed tyranny. That is in the interests of the civilised world.

The perspective of this decision on SDI on both sides extends well into the next century and clearly embraces that possibility. Our purpose is not merely the survival, but ultimately the legitimate enlargement, of the free world by the voluntary actions of convinced peoples.

The decision is not ours to make. It has been made by the United States, and inevitably our decision is merely

one of participation. But it is important that both should be right and fully justified. Both are decisions not only of greater importance but also of greater complexity than any which this House has addressed for many years. It is quite ludicrous that we should devote a mere three hours to a subject that could well justify a two-day debate. Once again our priorities reflect the lamentable unwillingness of this House to involve itself in scientific and technological decisions of great moment, partly because we do not understand them, and partly because we are so badly briefed.

Virtually all the briefing of any weight or consequence is, alas, American. There has been much discussion, but most of that—until General Abrahamson arrived in the United Kingdom this weekend — has been in the technical press. I have with me—it is a document that I commend to the House as an outstanding example of technical briefing—the report on anti-satellite weapons and counter-measures and arms control prepared for the United States Congress by the OTA. It is both a formidable and formidably important analysis, and there is one conclusion to which I draw the attention of the House.

After examining the seven major policy options—not just the one to which the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent referred—the OTA concluded:

"The opportunities and risks that might result from developing or not developing ASAT weapons or from pursuing or not pursuing ASAT arms control cannot be simply stated . . . the choices will require a delicate balancing of strategic economic and political interests. Reasonable persons can and will disagree as to the most appropriate nature of this balance."

That is a central conclusion to this debate. I support the objective and the programme, but I have serious reservations, some of them technical and some political.

My technical reservations are based fundamentally on what are known as the Parnas memoranda. Professor Parnas, who resigned from the SDI software panel, has in a series of formidably powerful papers argued that neither the software nor the hardware will prove sufficiently powerful, reliable or effective. His case is that the goal is unattainable.

I have seen no really convincing or persuasive reply to those memoranda. I should like to see such a reply, because nothing is more damaging to the reputation of science or technology, be it in the military or any other sphere, than attaching to it a series of expectations that are thought to be wildly unrealistic. We should reflect for a moment on what the computer system has to do.

Mr. Dalyell: A considered reply to the Parnas memoranda ought to be placed by Defence Ministers in the Library of the House within a month if there is to be a sensible discussion of this issue.

Mr. Lloyd: I accept much of what the hon. Gentleman says. A considered reply is certainly needed, as is a full debate. The discussion is too important to be glossed over. I have not yet seen a reply. There are others who believe that it exists. If it does, we should have it so that we can argue the case.

There are also a number of other quite fundamantal matters about which reasonable persons can and will disagree. I want to concentrate on four. The first is the potential of the technology. The second is the character of what is today called C_3I — command, communication control and intelligence. The third is the 100 per cent. criterion—whether it should be 100 per cent. successful if it is worth doing. The fourth is the spin-off justification.

I am powerfully persuaded by the documentation that I have seen — especially that of the OTA — that the technology has advanced to the point where the President is justified in attempting an ordered retreat from the "MAD" scenario — mutual assured destruction. The acronym is most appropriate, and the retreat if successful would be a triumph for the human race. However, I am convinced that even if a 100 per cent. layered defence proves finally to be unattainable, it is perhaps worth spending $60 billion to $100 billion to ensure that nine tenths of the human race survive the onslaught of a nuclear catastrophe.

My concern does not end there. The decision can never be left even to a 100 per cent. perfect computer system, however much it may depend on both. In this context we have most disturbing evidence from no less a person than Richard Beal, who until his death in 1984 was the senior director for crisis management systems in the White House.

At the Harvard conference on this subject, Mr. Beal made the following revealing reservations:

"We have very few analytic tools for the very high-level people. There are at most 20 people in the whole of the USA who can understand and cope with the complex decision systems in crisis management . . . I would describe crisis-decision making as organised anarchy . . . in a crisis, your tools become unclear to you, their uses become unclear and you apply them inappropriately. The crisis decision-maker can never say 'keep your eye on the meatball' because he doesn't know what the meatball is. My proposition to you is that, in all probability, whether it is the Secretary for Defense or the Secretary of State . . . he's wrong . . . you have to operate on the premise that when you are in a crisis decision, he is likely to be wrong."

Mr. Beal goes on to say that when the crisis is nuclear

"All the factors are a quantum jump. The magnitude of the data categories you have to deal with just gets staggering."

That is a profoundly disturbing commentary, but it is the heart of the system, and the situation is not very reassuring. Will we solve this problem by spending $60 billion on SDI, or whatever it takes? I think not. Other solutions are also required and will have to be sought. Without those solutions not even a 100 per cent. effective anti-ballistic missile system will guarantee the survival of our society or civilisation.

Therefore, I am not confident that a 100 per cent. defence is within sight. The only thing that will offer that is a sane world in which the pursuit of truth is given priority over the pursuit of power. That remains a distant goal. Is it worth pursuing 90 per cent.? The answer to that must, I think, be yes, or if, as a result of any serious collapse of stability or judgment, the system ever had to be used, that 10 per cent. would mean the difference between the collapse and survival of our civilisation. There is no high enough insurance premium that we can pay to achieve that objective. Moreover, I accept the powerful logic of the argument that no super-power would launch a pre-emptive strike in the certain knowledge that 90 per cent. of its missiles would not reach its targets.

Finally we come to the spin-off argument, the main justification so far for British participation. In my judgment, this has a limited validity — there will undoubtedly be a spin-off, but it is uncertain and capricious. The spin-off from our own massive defence research and development is lamentably small, however significant it may be in relation to the total expenditure involved. I see no reason to expect that it will be significantly greater with SDI.

[Mr. Lloyd]

Therefore, we must base our decision to participate on a much more secure basis—a profound confidence that the decision of the United States Government is soundly based—but we cannot neglect what we know of similar work in the Soviet Union. Everything that I have read reinforces my opinion that what is happening in this sector in the Soviet Union cannot be neglected or ignored by any reasonably objective person. If there is to be an option, we would prefer that option to be in the hands of the saner, more responsible half of the world. Even if that is not wholly successful, a limited success will increase the effectiveness of the West's defence, re-arm democracy and reduce our vulnerability to the pre-emptive strike. The option, the window of opportunity, will not remain open indefinitely, and we should seize it with both hands.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. This is a short debate and many right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. Brief speeches would be greatly appreciated.

5.53 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Like the hon. Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd), I welcome the opportunity presented by this debate. Up the corridor in the other place, there are many more opportunities to discuss this matter, often at the instigation of my noble Friends. I do not mean to criticise the Labour party when I say that I regret the timing of the debate, for we do not have an opportunity because of the absence of the Foreign Secretary, to hear him speak. We would have looked forward, had he been present, to hearing his critique of the SDI.

I do not wish to devote too much time to the technical difficulties or even the impossibilities of the project to which the hon. Member for Havant has referred. Nobody seriously talks about the possibility of a shield that would be 100 per cent. effective. However, I find talk in terms of 85 to 90 per cent. efficiency worrying. People seem to think of 85 per cent. success as being an achievement, and become blasé about the fact that one bomb, let alone 1 per cent. of 15 per cent., would devastate our civilisation.

Many people in academic and scientific life have fundamental doubts about the feasibility of producing a successful anti-ballistic defence on the scale imagined. Not only are there feasibility problems, as the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) has pointed out, but there is the unique problem that SDI is incapable of being tested. For many people in academic and scientific life, an ethical problem is posed, if they use research funds to pursue an object that, in all honesty and good faith, they believe to be unattainable. It is also a moral challenge to us if such vast resources are to be channelled into chasing what could turn out to be an illusion, when so many earthly problems could be alleviated by spending only a small fraction of the $26 billion earmarked for this research.

What alarmed me most about the response to the amendment moved by the Secretary of State for Defence was the way that he boxed in the issue to purely a research project. We cannot look at this research in a vacuum. It proceeds inevitably against a political background and inevitably it will influence the political environment. It is important that we address some of the problems of political strategy now.

In my intervention in the speech of the Minister, I quoted the words of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, which I shall repeat. In his March speech on the SDI he said:

"The history of weapons development and the strategic balance shows only too clearly that research into new weapons and study of their strategic implementations, must go hand in hand. Otherwise, research may acquire an unstoppable momentum of its own, even though the case for stopping may strengthen with the passage of years. Prevention may be better than later attempts at a cure."

Lord Zuckerman has already been prayed in aid by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot). In a debate in the other place Lord Zuckerman said:

"We must remember that the nuclear arms race is, and always has been, a race in R & D. The technological people who work in weapons laboratories . . . are not going to slow it down. The race can be slowed down and monitored only by political decision." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 30 January 1985; Vol. 459, c. 697.]

That is why it is important to address, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) did, the implications of this research project.

If we proceed with research and go on to develop and deploy SDI, it could have a destabilising effect, and could cause an effective barrier to arms control. Proponents of the system have argued that the West must deploy SDI research because equivalent Soviet research is going on apace. That point has already been made today. However, if the argument is that SDI will enhance stability and deterrence, what is wrong with the USSR unilaterally deploying such a defence shield? We know the answer because we had it from the hon. Member for Havant. He said that the Russians might use the security of the shield to hide behind and launch a first strike attack on the West.

It is said that the West would not use that advantage if it deployed SDI. That point has been reinforced by the agreement between the Prime Minister and President Reagan at Camp David, particularly in that part which said:

"The United States and the Western aim is not to achieve superiority but to maintain balance, taking account of Soviet developments."

Some scepticism has been expressed on this side of the Atlantic and in the House as to how genuine an expression of intention that is, but what we think is irrelevant. The critical issue is the perception of the Soviet Union. If it thinks, as it appears to do, that we would hide behind the shield and launch a first strike, and that the United States is trying to re-establish the power that it had when it had a monopoly of the atom bomb, almost inevitably it will make a response.

At the very worst the Soviet Union could respond by trying to make a pre-emtive strike in anticipation of a possible deployment, but more likely it would seek ways of countering the perceived threat. The Russians could seek to deploy a similar space defence system, although I doubt whether the Russian economy could withstand the enormous cost involved in that. More likely, they would try to defeat the objective of strategic defence by using technical means such as those already referred to by the right hon. Member for Leeds, East in reducing the boost phase in a missile launch, developing new kinds of decoy missiles or developing a means of taking out some of the shields' space installations. Perhaps most obviously of all,

they could increase their missiles to saturation point to ensure that a good number would successfully penetrate space defences — a response which also has the attraction of being cheaper than the parallel defence initiative and which would cost the United States more to keep up.

Dr. Robert Bowman of the Institute for Space and Security Studies, writing of his experiences when he was in charge of the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency in the 1970s, said:

"Every time we designed a dollar's worth of defence, we found it could be neutralised with a nickel's worth of offence."

As the Secretary of State said, one of the criteria for judging the success of SDI will be its cost-effectiveness. If that is one of the tests, it will have a difficult job in passing that test. It is largely accepted that it is cheaper to deploy missiles of offence rather than meet the enormous costs involved in this defence inititiative.

In the meantime, what incentive is there for the Soviet team in Geneva to negotiate deep cuts in strategic weapons if they fear that at some stage in the future they will have to build them up as a possible means of overcoming or getting round an American space shield? Supporters of the SDI project claim, with some justification, that it was the research programme which brought the Soviet negotiators back to Geneva. It would be a tragic waste of an opportunity to find an arms control agreement if an unwillingness to make any significant move on SDI became the rock on which the talks foundered. I agree with Professor Laurie Freedman that it

"would be easier to get Soviet agreement on a straightforward arms reduction than to the construction of a complicated new balance between offensive and defensive systems."

Opportunities are available to us today for successful arms reduction talks which could well be imperilled if there is no significant move on SDI.

Coming now to British participation in the project, I accept that there are great fears that we shall lose some of our unique advantage in computer technology. An article in this week's issue of *Jane's Defence Weekly* by Mr. Paul Walton must give us some concern about restrictions which could be imposed on possible further developments in research projects in Britain if they were linked with SDI. There has been no great evidence of any important civil spin-offs. We all fear—Opposition Members, anyway—a misuse of resources, both financial and intellectual, at a time when we should be crying out for civil research and development to find a new base on which we can recreate our manufacturing industry and also, in the military field, to develop emerging technologies as a means of enhancing conventional defences in Europe.

I also complain of the Government's attitude vis-à-vis the United States. We are becoming increasingly tired of a number of events which suggest that they adopt a "me, too" attitude — that what is good for America is inevitably good for Britain, with no critical analysis of the issues involved. It is not even that we are being dragged along on the United States' coat tails. Rather it appears that from time to time the Prime Minister is running to catch on to them. It is not anti-American to say that we have had enough of it.

In the context of SDI, one can legitimately ask what it offers Britain. If we believe, as my party does, that we should be building up the European pillar of NATO, a United States oriented project offers us little or nothing. It could weaken NATO. We have already seen that our Prime Minister has rushed into an agreement while some of our European NATO allies are hesitating more. If the stage of possible deployment is reached, that could put even further strain on the NATO Alliance. As the Foreign Secretary said last March,

"how would protection be extended against the non-ballistic nuclear threat, the threat posed by aircraft or cruise missiles, battlefield nuclear weapons or, in the last resort, by covert action?"

How would it give protection to the very threats to which western Europe is most exposed?

If Britain has a role to play in all this, it should not be as the hanger-on trying to catch a few crumbs from the rich man's table, but rather as an old and candid ally of the United States, pointing out the potential dangers of the path that it is going down. That is an opportunity that we should be taking, not waiting for the end of a research phase when, as I have said before, the momentum might have become unstoppable.

Mr. Younger: Before the hon. Gentleman sits down, will he do the House the honour of making it clear whether he, the Liberal party and the SDP are for or against British participation in the SDI research programme?

Mr. Wallace: The right hon. Gentleman pre-empted my final sentence. For the reasons that I have given, my right hon. and hon. Friends will support the motion tonight and show our objection to the strategic defence initiative.

6.5 pm

Sir Patrick Wall (Beverley): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said that we are debating British co-operation in SDI research, and that is what I intend to do. I shall not make use of highly selective quotations as produced by the Opposition. However, I understand that the Federal Republic of Germany is about to follow our example by signing an official agreement, so we are not alone.

I want to bring the House back to what is happening. First, what is the SDI? It is basically a non-nuclear form of defence against ballistic missiles. As has been said, it is a research programme. Surely a non-nuclear defence programme should be supported by the Opposition, the Left and CND, but, unfortunately, it is not supported by any of them.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) virtually asked whether it would work. During recent discussions in America I found that people who believe in SDI say that it will work and those who do not believe in it and think that it is a bad idea say that it will not work. If the Americans can put a man on the moon they can achieve what they want in SDI, and in a much shorter time than my right hon. Friend seems to think. I have heard four or five years suggested by some experts.

How is the research proceeding? This is important. First, there must be surveillance satellites to have a look at the whole picture and there is no paticular difficulty in that. Secondly, there is the boost phase lasting about two to five minutes when the maximum heat is generated. There, the research is on chemical lasers and electromagnetic rail guns from satellites. Thirdly, there is the post-boost stage, lasting seven to 10 minutes. That is when the boosters fall away and the 10—or fewer—MIRVs are deployed together with the decoys, possibly up to 100. At that time the ballistic missile is about 125 miles up. Research there is concentrating on pop-up X-ray laser

[Sir Patrick Wall]

missiles from submarines. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) is right to say that that is the only nuclear aspect. The boost for this missile, about 125 miles up, is a small nuclear generator which produces the laser. That is the only nuclear part of the programme.

Fourthly, there is the mid-course phase, which lasts 20 to 26 minutes, and experiments are taking place on ground-based lasers or particle beams reflecting from mirrors in satellites. Lastly there is the re-entry, or terminal, phase when the missile is 30 miles up, which will last two to three minutes. The F15 and the "Smart Rock" missile have already been experimented on successfully and experiments on flechettes and particle beam electromagnetic guns are proceeding.

I have mentioned those experiments because we in Europe, and certainly we in Britain, are ahead of America in many specific issues of that experimentation. For example, we are ahead on electro-optics. We are ahead on some aspects of radar particle beams and lasers and on the reflection from mirrors. On all those issues, Europe, and Britain in particular, is ahead of America. Therefore the Americans want to co-operate with us just as much as we want to co-operate with them. The Americans are spending $3,300 million in the 1986 financial year on the SDI and the Soviet Union is I am told, spending 10 times as much. I remind the House that the Soviet Union started its programme in the late 1960s, so it has a good lead.

I shall go briefly through some of the arguments. Star wars is nothing to do with SDI. Its about anti-satellite satellites, and there the Soviet Union is well ahead of the West. It has been argued that SDI provides protection for America, not for Europe. An intercontinental ballistic missile fired from central Russia may be targeted on London, Rome or New York—no one knows. If ICBMs are stopped during the boost phase, Europe and America are protected. The experts have informed me that this system is designed to bring down long-range rockets but that short-range rockets are easier to bring down, for various technical reasons. This means that the terminal phase would have to take place in Europe because short-range rockets would be fired against Europe.

It has been argued that the SDI is destabilising. The USSR has been experimenting since 1966 on forms of the SDI. What would happen if the USSR achieved a perfect defence system and the West did not? The West would be open to nuclear blackmail to which it would have no answer. That point has not been brought out in the debate. The USSR could have achieved a perfect defence system before America but, now that America has woken up and is doing something, she will get there first. She deserves our generous co-operation. If the SDI strengthens the deterrent in America and Europe, I do not see how it can be destabilising. The Soviet Union is experimenting with anti-satellite systems and has 10,000 surface-to-air missiles. Its air defence system is stronger than any other country's. It has been argued that the SDI is decoupling. If it strengthens both America and Europe, it cannot be decoupling. The SDI would be de-coupling, and therefore be the end of both of us, only if the USSR got there first.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland referred to 100 per cent. defence. The experts have told me that it is highly unlikely that 100 per cent. protection will ever be achieved. It is also highly unnecessary. A 50 or 60 per cent. defence capability is enough. A country that knows that 50 per cent. of its missiles on each target will be brought down is unlikely to start a nuclear war. Therefore, we do not need a 100 per cent. defence, and no one expects it to reach that level.

Arms control has been mentioned. Recently, I visited Geneva and talked to various organisations attending the conference on disarmament. I believe that the Soviet Union will make concessions on intermediate nuclear forces to split Europe from the United States. The Soviet Union will then say, "We shall implement these concessions only if the Americans drop the SDI." I believe, following discussions in the Pentagon and on the Hill, that it is impossible for the Americans to drop the SDI. They will go ahead whatever Europe does. There is, therefore, a danger that the Russians will use this blackmail to try to separate the United States from Europe.

The non-proliferation point has been argued, but the SDI is non-nuclear and that point is not of concern in this debate. I believe, despite what some hon. Members have said, that the technological fallout will be high. I do not believe that any country that wants to be in the first rank in terms of technology can avoid co-operating in this scheme.

I shall not refer to the 1984 Thatcher-Reagan agreement because reference has already been made to it. All I will say is that the Americans and the Europeans are extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for starting off the project with some important rules.

The strategic defence initiative with a non-nuclear defence will lessen the threat from ballistic missiles and will eventually enable most ballistic nuclear missiles to be abandoned. Surely that is what we want. The main debate during the North Atlantic Assembly's plenary session in October in San Fransisco was on SDI. A composite resolution was tabled which catered for most tastes and therefore allowed people to vote who otherwise might not have done so. The eighth and operative paragraph of the resolution stated:

"To support US research in SDI consistent with the provisions of the ABM Treaty."

The vote on the resolution was 91 in favour, 12 against, with 28 abstentions.

6.14 pm

Dr. John Gilbert (Dudley, East): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) on his first speech as Secretary of State for Defence. Although I do not agree with everything he said, I think that he gave a competent performance.

I am opposed to development and deployment of SDI, but on grounds that differ greatly from those so far advanced by my colleagues. I should like to make it clear that I reluctantly support the United States' research programme and participation by British companies in that programme, if possible.

As the debate has shown, there are many concepts of the strategic defence initiative—for example, that it will be available only for silo protection, that it will be available for city protection, and that it will be available for complete protection, which is the 100 per cent. umbrella concept. No one knows what will emerge. The hon. Members for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) and for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) are highly sceptical that there will be anything like a 100 per cent. umbrella.

Hon. Members have quoted various sources. In addition, distinguished former American Secretaries of

Defence such as Mr. Harold Brown and Mr. James Schlesinger take that view. I dissent to some extent from the view put by the hon. Member for Beverley because I believe that anything less than a 100 per cent. shield would be an appalling waste of resources. I would not want 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. of the Russian warhead inventory landing on NATO countries. That would be the end of civilisation as we knew it.

The 100 per cent. shield would involve not just the SDI but the Americans in reconstituting defences against the manned bomber and creating, ab initio, defences against submarine-launched cruise missiles. That is the element of the threat about which the Americans are most concerned. The cost of creating a threefold defensive system of that sort will be not hundreds of billions of dollars but thousands of billions of dollars—an obscene amount.

I am unhappy about the Reagan concept of the 100 per cent. shield because it is incompatible with the concept of nuclear deterrence. I believe in that concept. That is not a fashionable view in my party at the moment, but I see no reason to change my mind. If one could create an impermeable shield around the United States there would be considerable implications for Europe's defence.

It has been said that it might be possible to create an effective defence against incoming ballistic missiles for western Europe. I am even more sceptical about that than I am about the possibilities of creating such a defence for north America. It is far more difficult to defend Europe against the manned bomber or cruise missiles than to defend the United States. A manned bomber that wanted to reach cities in Canada, let alone those in the United States, would have to cover 4,000 miles of tundra. Nothing could be easier to find in thousands of miles of tundra where the only other warm presence is a polar bear and where there is nothing else metallic. Of course, the fog of war in western Europe would be totally different from war in North America. The Secretary of State knows that it is impossible to guarantee the defence of these islands against attack by manned bombers. I am glad that he has acknowledged that.

It has been argued that SDI is destabilising. I tended towards that view at one time, but I am no longer so sure. It would certainly be true if one envisaged a scenario in which on one day the United States had no effective defence against ballistic missiles and then a short time afterwards had something very close to an effective defence, but that is not likely to develop. As we have heard today, and as everybody knows, Soviet research has been taking place for years in those areas.

In my judgment, it is almost certain that Soviet capabilities lag behind American capabilities, but their capabilities will develop just as the Americans' have. I find it inconceivable that the Americans will be able to produce an effective system of this sort and the Soviet Union will be left with the cupboard bare. I do not think that the accusation of destabilisation is a very powerful argument to use against the SDI programme.

I am a strong supporter of the ABM treaty. I am glad that my right hon. and hon. Friends have acknowledged that in the past. I believe that it is the best way to preserve the principle of deterrence. If we lose that treaty, which we might, the principle of deterrence falls by the wayside.

Several things have been said today about President Reagan's views on these matters. However, we can all take comfort from the fact that President Reagan will not be around for the final decisions, or for more than a couple of years—at least as President. It is certain that funding in the United States will be doubtful after 1988. So far, only one of the likely presidential candidates in 1988 is committed to the programme—Mr. Bush. As far as I know, none of the others has committed himself to the programme, and certainly the members of the Congress with whom I have discussed the matter are extremely reluctant to contemplate the huge amounts of money that would be involved, not only in continuing the research programme but going forward to full development.

I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) has come into the Chamber, because I was about to say something about Krasnoyarsk. I would not want to say anything in his absence and I certainly would not want to give him a seminar on any subject, but the difference between Thule, Fylingdales and Krasnoyarsk is not necessarily what is contained in the phased array radars but the siting of them. Thule and Fylingdales are on the periphery of the territories they are protecting and Krasnoyarsk is in the middle. That is a considerable strategic difference.

Mr. Healey: Of course; that is why Krasnoyarsk is a technical breach of the treaty, and I said that. The American argument is that it is intended for the control of a space defence system of the type the Americans are trying to develop. As I understand it, that is not a view held by the British Government, who have refused to endorse the American view. Many people doubt that even the Americans could master the computer technology required for their system, and the idea that the Russians could master it is preposterous.

Dr. Gilbert: I am glad that once again my right hon. Friend and I are in total agreement. I hope that the new Secretary of State will be more forthcoming on the matter of Krasnoyarsk than his predecessor, despite several appearances to be questioned by the Select Committee on this matter.

I am totally opposed to the deployment of the SDI. I think that it would be a most appalling waste of resources. It could make the world less safe. Fortunately, I think it is most unlikely to fulfil President Reagan's vision. But I must say that I support American research in that area. In present circumstances, I do not see that the Americans have any choice. It would be nothing but irresponsible of any American Administration to abandon their research while faced with continuing Russian research. It does not matter who started it; the important thing is where we are now.

If the Americans are to continue with the research, I see no reason why British companies should not share in it. There are obviously problems with respect to property rights and COCOM and they are matters which I hope will be investigated by the Select Committee on defence. It had already started investigating those matters before it was side-tracked by other recent matters. All of those things need to be considered with the greatest concern. We should not support the development of prototypes and every effort must be made to negotiate away any further development in that area. As of now, I must say that I think that the United States has no choice but to proceed with the research.

6.25 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip, Northwood): I am glad that the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert)

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

put the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) right on Krasnoyarsk. It was more than a technical error in his speech; it was a fundamental flaw. It was actually even worse, because the Krasnoyarsk radar is situated away from the periphery where it would be well located for battle management were such a capability to be in existence. It is its proximity to potential targets that is so important. A technical breach of the treaty, as the right hon. Member for Leeds, East calls it, is a very serious matter. Building a major facility of this kind in a place which is clearly and demonstrably against article 6 of the ABM treaty is a matter which the United States must take into account when making its assessment of Soviet intentions.

I think that the more awesome the weapons of massive destruction that are targeted against us, the more important it is for us to seek a defence against them. It is a moral dimension to the argument, something which the President of the United States has always preached. It is not just a technical matter or a matter of keeping up with the Soviet Union. There is a clear will on President Reagan's part, and on the part of his Administration, to try to remove some of the awesome threat that hangs over mankind. The mutual balance of terror has assured the peace, but we cannot be certain that it always will. If by accident or miscalculation the deterrent broke down, I would much rather have 85 or 90 per cent. of defence, or even 50 per cent. as my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) said is effective, than none at all. No one can convince me that total vulnerability enhances deterrence. The reverse is the case.

When the manned penetrating bomber was the main instrument of Western deterrence, we thought it appropriate and wholly right, as did the then former Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Leeds, East, to seek a measure of defence against it with our fighter forces, and we still do. Yet, strangely, in his speech he criticised the SDI because, he said, it was a means of defending missile silos and launch sites and not populations. The fighter forces, in the days when Fighter Command sought to protect the V bomber bases, did just that. However, if the SDI is fully implemented—that is, if the research programme proves to be successful and the technology is found to be attainable and we can move from point defence systems to a full panoply of multilayered space-based defence systems—we shall have a global system of defence which will protect populations as well as launch sites. It will protect not only our friends and allies, but neutrals and other countries which could be subject to ballistic missile attack. It really is a very exciting prospect.

As we have devoted so much energy and such huge sums of money to developing offensive systems of mass destruction, would it not be better if, in these days, we used at least part of our intellectual energy and part of our resources to see whether we can use our new technologies to defend populations? We could not achieve 100 per cent. defence, but the SDI will greatly minimise the prospect of pre-emptive attack, which is what we most fear. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley made clear, no potential aggressor will ever be certain that he can destroy any particular target. In other words, the capability for retaliation will remain and deterrence will be enhanced.

As was so well explained by my hon. Friend, who is so expert on these matters, the alliance has long depended upon the United States' nuclear guarantee. Without it we should have been naked and there might conceivably have been aggression against western Europe as there has been against Afghanistan and other neutral countries bordering the Soviet Union. It is the certainty of United States' nuclear retaliation on our behalf that has preserved the peace.

If our American friends feel that by invoking a nuclear response in defence of western Europe they are not, as a consequence of that retaliation on our behalf, ensuring the incineration of their cities, the more likely it will be that they will be prepared to go nuclear and defend western Europe. If, however, the United States feels that the destruction of the North American homeland is certain if it invokes nuclear retaliation on our behalf, the United States President would be unlikely to invoke the response that we need. That is why the United States nuclear guarantee is enhanced by the SDI.

We come to the question whether the SDI will accelerate the arms race and diminish prospects for arms control. It is my belief, as it is the belief of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), that the Soviet economy will be less able than NATO to sustain an arms race, if that is the way it wants to go.

It is my earnest hope, and that of the United States Administration and my right hon. and hon. Friends in Government, that this prospect is too awesome to contemplate. Rather than proliferate offensive systems and maximise the penetration potential of its strategic weaponry, it would be better for the Soviet Union, in the face of strategic defence, to seek to build down its offensive armoury. There could then be a genuine prospect of a breakthrough in arms control.

We have been waiting for that breakthrough for a long time, and it has not happened. After NATO's deployment of cruise missiles, the Soviets walked out of the Geneva talks. It was only when the President insisted on going through with SDI, and was not diverted from its purpose, that was it clear to them that they had better come back and talk.

I wholly applaud the clear exposition of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, who said that there were good grounds for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and her Government to support the United States Administration in the endeavour of the SDI. It is an allied endeavour. In the sphere of strategic deterrence, arms control and the balance of power it is a small world. In space terms, this planet is a very small globe. People must learn to think in different terms from those with which they were brought up.

In last year's debate on the Royal Air Force I urged it to place much greater emphasis on a space-based defence systems than it does at present. The United States Air Force has a space command. We must move in that direction, not to increase the arms race, but to increase our joint defence potential.

I whole-heartedly support my right hon. Friends' reasoned amendment.

6.34 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): It is important that we understand what has moved the United States to undertake a close examination of the possibilities

of strategic defence. We should examine them critically and decide whether we support tonight's motion which challenges them.

President Reagan's decision seems to have arisen from several factors. The first was the deterioration of the strategic balance that has occurred since the signing of SALT I in 1972. It was then our hope and assumption that, with the stringent limits on defence against ballistic missiles embodied in the treaty, the negotiation of significant reductions in strategic offensive nuclear arms would be possible. That has not proved to be the case.

The number of warheads on Soviet strategic ballistic missiles today is four times greater than when SALT I was concluded. Furthermore, the Soviet capability to destroy hard targets quickly has increased by a factor of 10. That growth in offensive capabilities is contrary to what the House of Commons expected in 1972.

At the same time, the Soviets have been pursuing major efforts on the defensive side. Over the past 20 years, they have spent about as much on strategic defence as they have on their massive offensive nuclear build-up. They have deployed extensive air defences and the world's only operational ABM and anti-satellite systems.

Moreover, the Soviets have for many years devoted extensive resources to investigating many of the same technologies that are now being brought together in the SDI research programme but without the public debate that we are having today.

The aggregate of Soviet offensive and defensive activities since 1972, some of which are in violation of, or raise troubling questions about, compliance with existing arms control agreements, is persuasive evidence that they did not accept the concept of stable mutual deterrence on which the House believed the ABM treaty to be premised.

A second factor leading to the SDI was the technological advances which have taken place since 1972. Great strides have been made in effectiveness and cost reductions in many areas relevant to ballistic missile defence, such as microelectronics, data processing and sensors. They may now make possible defensive systems that were beyond the reach of the technology of 15 years ago. Technology is thus opening new possibilities for strategic defence and may offer survivable and cost-effective defensive systems.

The third factor behind the SDI is the current requirement by the West to undertake a profound re-evaluation of the basis of its defence thinking in the nuclear age. Soviet force levels are now superior to those of NATO in each component of the triad on which Western defence policy is based—conventional arms, INF and strategic nuclear arms. The maintenance of stability through arms control and agreement in Geneva has been rendered even more difficult given the assymetries of force structures and levels on both sides.

When new technologies offer the West a way out from under the shadow of that new threat—one in which deterrence would be based more on the ability to defend rather than to retaliate with predictably tragic devastation—and when it might be possible to offer a better and brighter vision for the future, we have an obligation to search for it. But what if the SDI continues to get in the way of East-West agreement? What if it proves to be destabilising, given the vital importance of strategic balance in maintaining deterrence?

What if the SDI leaves western Europe much more exposed militarily, and thus leads to decoupling? What if the SDI becomes politically devisive as the Soviet Union seeks to exploit unease within the Alliance, as she did over the deployment of cruise missiles? What if the SDI induces a Maginot line mentality in space, as the Foreign Secretary has apprehended? What if the SDI gives added impetus to the French Eureka programme? What if the convenient arrival of certain technologies and the prospect of billions of dollars sloshing around in defence procurement have gravely affected our thinking and judgment? Would it not then become a classic case of technology driving policy rather than the other way around?

That is borne out by the widespread fear that high spending on strategic defence may result in less money being available for conventional forces. Paul Nitze has argued on behalf of the United States that a shift of only 1 per cent. in resources is involved. Does that not give a misleading impression, because the gap between resource allocation and force planning remains ominously wide?

Only 70 per cent. of NATO force goals are realised in national programmes, yet across the Alliance there are budgetary constraints ahead. The most serious deficiency at present is in sustainability, as the Supreme Allied Commander, General Rogers, has frequently given public utterance to. It is in ordinary bread and butter items, such as ammunition stocks, hardened aircraft shelters, improved reception facilities for reinforcements and so on. Therefore, it is not only the impact of a vast lavishly financed space-based programme on conventional arms programmes that is of concern, but the shift of priority that it may indicate.

Conventional insufficiency has the most serious implications for the nuclear threshold, as every hon. Member knows. Might not the enormous sums that are being allocated to the SDI be better employed to enhance deterrence than to risk undermining it?

Stripped of technical jargon and sophisticated language, the appeal of the SDI for the layman lies in the possibility that it might at long last enable us to bottle the nuclear genie. To shift from mutually assured destruction to mutually assured security has an irresistable appeal for us all. To achieve even the transitional stage of a mix of offensive and defensive systems with a diminishing nuclear content is an alluring thought. However, doubts and worries are widespread, not only in Europe, but in the United States. Some of the questions raised during the debate may defy answers at present, but they are of such critical importance that they must be faced. We cannot shrug them off as the Secretary of State did today.

6.42 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Last autumn I spent some time in the United State and met some scientists, including Dr. Richard Gavin and Dr. Sydney Drell, who were sceptical about the SDI. It was more the technical than the strategic problems which held the attention of the majority.

We do not know yet whether the SDI will work and whether 15 systems can combine in perfect harmony. The point of the research programme is to find a way in which it can work. It is said that physics may not be without limits, but the ability of human genius to overcome obstacles is so far unlimited, and the will to do something is always important in finding solutions. This massive and

[Mrs. Anna McCurley]

imaginative programme needs political will, not carping discouragement or hard judgments based only on speculation.

The SDI is the challenge of all time. It is an exciting new challenge to render nuclear weapons obsolete, to have defensive defence which kills other weapons but does not destroy civilians and industrial targets as offensive nuclear weapons can, and which poses a probability problem for a hostile power, which could never claim to know that it could achieve its military objectives.

The SDI is sometimes known as the great experiment. The question whether it will work on a systems level and whether it can work as a strategy is important. Every strategy depends on treaties and co-operation for control, and no system can be 100 per cent. effective. Everything that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said could happen, might happen, but at present, if deterrence fails, there is nothing to stop USSR missiles from reaching their targets.

Mutually assured destruction is a precarious balance for the world to operate on, and the number of nuclear weapons has mushroomed dangerously since the war. We must call a halt to that increase and to the intellectual impasse which has been created in its wake. General Abrahamson has said that if only a few nuclear missiles land it is very different from 8,000 landing, and that a defensive deterrent is fail safe, whereas an offensive deterrent is fail deadly. That is the profound difference in concept.

One of the major objections to the 15 major experiments that are planned is that the programme may violate the ABM treaty signed by the super-powers in 1972. The treaty was an acknowledgement by both sides of the futility of building terminal stage intercept systems to guard against warheads delivered by ballistic missiles. At the time it seemed to be a major step towards stopping the arms race, since the offence would no longer be required to saturate the defence.

The treaty permitted each side to build defences on a single site. The USSR chose defence around Moscow, and the United States chose defences in North Dakota, which I visited while in the United States. The treaty allows for research into ABM systems, but prohibits the building of new components. Amendments and reviews are permitted under the treaty and the strategic defence initiative. In its present form the SDI is technically compliant. A decision on development will be made by the United States within the confines of the ABM treaty. The Soviets, who have been in this area for many years, seem to be in danger of flouting the treaty, but the United States has offered to share the new technology and monitoring with the Soviets. I believe that the SDI programme has helped to achieve that, and that the peace initiative was prompted by the SDI.

Finally, the major criticism is: why should Britain wish to protect the United States alone? My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall) gave sound reasons for our participation in the programme, and already the initiative for the defence of European aerospace has been mooted for approval in Europe. It is a valuable consequence of the SDI, and it could also help to overcome the limitations which we might face on the transfer of technology through export controls, despite the memorandum of understanding with the United States. We have been promised a share in the $26 billion, and we should ignore that at our peril as it is a great challenge and stimulus to British technology. If firms can compete and win, it is to our benefit.

We must go ahead to see whether the system will work. In the fulness of time scientists will make the technology work, but politicians must make the strategy work. It is our only hope of releasing ourselves from the present capricious game of nuclear stockpiling. Britain's involvement is a must, both in the United States system and in a programme for Europe, which would enhance our security in western Europe.

6.48 pm

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): When President Reagan made his televised address on 23 March 1983 it had an enormous impact on the American electorate. It was designed to do so because at that time Americans were becoming increasingly worried about the effect of nuclear war, and increasingly appreciating that the survivors would envy the dead, and that the idea of fighting a nuclear war was unthinkable. Increasing numbers of Americans were supporting the freeze movement. In essence, that address was an excellent piece of political propaganda. It influenced the American electorate to advance the idea that the American Government could develop a system that rendered nuclear weapons obsolete and meant that in future Americans would no longer have to fear the effect of a nuclear attack. The first question that must be asked is whether there is any realistic prospect of achieving a so-called shield that would render the United States invulnerable to nuclear attack. The answer is no.

A measure of how skilful the propaganda has been is the tendency that exists to forget that we are talking only of long-range ballistic missiles. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said in his opening remarks, that technology has no relevance to cruise missiles. Even if the system were effective in providing the protection that its advocates suggest, would it render long-range ballistic missiles impotent and obsolete? Again, the answer is a categorical no. I do not speak out of arrogance, because of my knowledge on those matters, but on the basis of statements by leading scientists in Britain, Europe and the United States. Those leading scientists are agreed. Professor Jack Ruina, professor of electronic engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who previously worked for the American Defence Department, stated clearly that the whole idea was absurd. The system cannot achieve the objective laid down by President Reagan.

Throughout Europe and the United States there is much interest in the money that will be invested in the huge programme. British scientists are interested in the money. I pay tribute to those British scientists who have taken a principled stand and who are not prepared to accept the money or to continue with the research, because they would be a part of the SDI programme. However, many scientists take a different view and would accept the money.

I am worried about the enormous impact of American defence money on Britain's research and technology base. One reason for Britain's relative industrial decline has been the fact that far too high a proportion—53 per cent. and rising—of Government-funded research and development is in the military sphere. It is a mistake to increase that percentage even further. I fear the

consequences of greater American funding, influence and control over Britain's basic scientific research and development. I cannot believe that that would be in Britain's interest.

There is much concern about the secrecy aspect and the fact that Americans will impose conditions on the results of the research, thus making it less available to benefit British industry.

Obviously, results will be achieved from all that money and tremendous advances will be made in scientific and technological work that has been funded by the programme, but will that make nuclear war more or less likely? All the evidence shows that nuclear war would be more likely. Time does not allow me to develop all the arguments to substantiate that statement. However, I have often argued that the whole philosophy of mutually assured destruction is being undermined by the development of new accurate weapons, which are designed to destroy not populations but military installations and command centres. The development of partial protection for missile sites will enhance instability.

We must recognise the likely Soviet response. If necessary, the Soviets will deploy more offensive weapons and they will develop less vulnerable ballistic missiles by such developments as shortening the boost phase and incorporating more decoys. The Soviet Union and the United States will soon have the capability to destroy satellites and thus attack a defensive system. SDI is a destabilising development.

I wish to discuss the impact on arms control. I respect the statement of the Secretary of State for Defence. I am sure that he is committed to the 1972 ABM treaty. However, the SDI is not a continuation of research in the United States and the Soviet Union. The SDI is a massive programme with a special goal. It is hard to believe that it will be stopped in the 1990s. There will be too much pressure to go forward. It has already been said that the United States will not give the Soviet Union a veto. Having done all the research and having acquired some capability to provide some protection, there will be enormous pressure to go further and begin deployment.

Instead of the Government being in the lead in Europe in relation to the SDI, they should be in the lead in getting a positive response from the United States to Mr. Gorbachev's latest proposals, which came out of discussions between the United States Government and the Soviet Government. Those proposals are enormously important. It is sad that notice has not been taken of the significant concessions that Mr. Gorbachev has built into those proposals, which are tailored to objections put forward in the past by the United States and Britain.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East referred to zero option, which is the removal of intermediate range weapons and not only moving SS20s into the Asian sector but destroying them. The Soviet Union accepts that if Britain and France do not modernise, they can keep their nuclear weapons without them being counted in. The extension of the nuclear unilateral moratorium on nuclear tests, the commitment to new verification procedures and the suggestion, I think, that research on SDI will be allowed to go ahead provided that it is no more than that, are important concessions.

If we are serious about making progress and reducing the threat of nuclear war, instead of going down the road of the SDI we should make the maximum effort to bring maximum pressure to bear on the Soviet and American Governments to negotiate on the basis of the latest proposals, so that we can achieve real reductions in their nuclear arsenals.

6.56 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I support the view of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I congratulate him on making such a fine presentation of the Government's case. I am delighted that a Foreign Office Minister is to sum up, because some of my comments are addressed more to the Foreign Office than to the Ministry of Defence.

I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends agree that our support for the Government's position should not stop us expressing concern about the implications of SDI and the need to face the problems arising from those implications. Anxiety has been expressed today and by members of the North Atlantic Assembly whom I met in Brussels during the weekend about whether there will be a genuine two-way transfer of technology, less money for conventional defence, the effects of strategic stability and for Britain, the impact of the extension of strategic defences on the effectiveness of the French and British nuclear deterrent and the defence of western Europe.

Reports from Geneva suggest that, as a part of the package of disarmement proposals, the United States would agree to remove all its medium-range nuclear weapon systems from Europe and that the Russians would withdraw their SS20s behind the Urals and would not in the initial stages insist on immediate reductions leading to the dismantling of the French and British nuclear forces. However, the understanding is that there would not be any steps taken by the British and the French to modernise their nuclear deterrent forces. For Britain, that means goodbye to the Trident programme, on which work has already begun.

I recognise that the United States' prime objective in the negotiations is to seek immediate cuts in offensive strategic forces with no restrictions on defensive research. I hope that the British Government will make it clear to our American allies that there can be no question of our deterrent being used as a bargaining chip least of all in the early stages of disarmement negotiations. We shall wish to see firm and verifiable evidence of the Soviet build-down before our nuclear forces can be the subject of negotiation.

The mind boggles to contemplate the withdrawal of intermediate nuclear forces from Europe after all the fuss of installing cruise and Pershing in western Europe. The Duke of York's experience was nothing on this. The withdrawal of medium-range SS20s behind the Urals does not preclude their redeployment west of the Urals directed at western Europe. Nor should we forget that such an arrangement would leave intact the SS21 missile and the SS23 missile, which has a range of up to 500 km.

That highlights an anxiety in western Europe, which has been expressed especially in West Germany. It is well known that our conventional forces are insufficiently strong to resist a Soviet conventional attack. At best, they could not prevent conventional Soviet forces from overrunning all of West Germany and extending into the Netherlands. At worst, we would lose such a war, which is one reason why Conservative Members and a few Opposition Members recognise the need for nuclear

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

weapons which, by their presence, would deter an attack. The use of tactical nuclear weapons would stop a conventional attack in its tracks.

I hope that the Government will continue to make it clear to the United States that, in its desire to achieve a build-down in nuclear strategic weapons on the way to a better balance of offensive and defensive systems, which is what SDI is about, it should be careful not to weaken prematurely the present delicate balance of military power, with its mix of nuclear and conventional forces, which has been the cornerstone of nuclear strategy for the past 30 years. Nor in the negotiations should the United States forget that a nuclear-free Europe would not be a chemical-free Europe. We in Europe have no chemical capability; the Russians have.

Although I understand why research into SDI must and will continue—there is no way of stopping it and I would not wish to stop it—on our way to a nuclear-free world, I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will do all that he can to minimise the destabilising effects that SDI may have on the defence of western Europe, not least in the context of the Geneva negotiations.

7.1 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): In view of the limitation on time, right hon. and hon. Members will forgive me if I do not deal with all of the points that have been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House in this short debate.

The short history of the Government's endorsement of SDI and their over-hasty involvement in its commercial and industrial implementation is shameful and humiliating. Once again, the Government have demonstrated their subservience to American defence and foreign policies and to American commercial and industrial interests. They have acted in a manner that far transcends Britain's proper duties and obligations to a major NATO ally.

The sorry tale started on 21 December 1984 when the Prime Minister, at Camp David, hitched Britain's tottering and tattered wagon to star wars. As always on such occasions, there were fine words to mask exactly what was being done. The agreement was ridiculously and pompously described as the Camp David accord. Many nice phrases and words such as "research" and "enhanced and extended deterrence" were used—phrases that had hardly been heard before and some of which had not been dreamt of before. But that is the history of the nuclear arms race. The words, phraseology and philosophy—if it can be called that—follow the technological decisions.

The Secretary of State for Defence talked about the flexible response debates in the 1950s and 1960s. I remind him that there has been no consultation on SDI. No other NATO country was consulted before President Reagan announced the initiative. Indeed, it had not even been thought of in those other countries. To equate the present position, where decisions were taken unilaterally, with what happened in the past is a travesty of the history of that period.

After the Camp David accord, the message in Washington was clear: Maggie had been squared and the poor old Brits were in. In the *New York Times* on 16 March 1984, about a speech by the Prime Minister to Congress in February—the House will remember that she told the President that we in Britain thought he was wonderful—a reporter said:

"Mrs. Thatcher's speech was widely interpreted as offering almost unqualified backing to SDI."

From then on, with the honourable exception of one speech by the Foreign Secretary—the speech, and the Foreign Secretary, were promptly squashed—no attempt has been made to analyse, debate or confront the enormous military and strategic implications of SDI. All the talk now is about money, contracts and dollars.

In fairness to him, I should say that the Foreign Secretary tried. On 15 March last year, he produced a courteous but devastating criticism of the strategic defence initiative. He said that research could acquire an unstoppable momentum; it has done so repeatedly throughout the nuclear arms race. He said that political decisions could be pre-empted by technology; they always are. The technology comes first and we sit here and try to rationalise and fit the technology into a political or military strategy. He said that offensive weapons might increase to overwhelm defences; that will certainly happen unless people sit down soon and negotiate a treaty to prevent it. He said that SDI could cause strains within the NATO Alliance.

However, well before the ink was dry on that speech, a ton of bricks fell on the poor Foreign Secretary's head. It started with *The Times* on 18 March, which called the speech

"muddled, mealy-mouthed, luddite and ill-informed."

It pompously told us of the anger of the inner circle of the American Administration. *The Times* clearly has a hot line to the White House and the Pentagon. But worse was to follow. The American ambassador called at Carlton gardens and, a few days later, at a conference in London of the loony Right—a conference that was welcomed by the Prime Minister and President Reagan—Mr. Richard Perle, who is I believe a Pentagon apparatchik, made an astonishing attack on the Foreign Secretary of a major NATO ally. He arrogantly said of the speech:

"Length is no substitute for depth."

That was that. No member of the Government defended the Foreign Secretary, as far as I am aware. There was no statement from the Prime Minister defending her Foreign Secretary——

Mr. Healey: She apologised.

Mr. Davies: She apologised, as my right hon. Friend has said. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary did not defend himself, and has said little, if anything, about SDI ever since. At that point, the humiliation and the capitulation were complete.

The drama moves to 23 June last year, when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) went to the Pentagon. I remind the House that the former Secretary of State for Defence was, at that time, homo Americanus. He had not yet evolved into his new phase of European man. Perhaps there were stirrings deep in the forest. He went to get some contracts from his friend Caspar. His intention was to get £1·5 billion-worth of contracts, but, as we all know, he came back completely empty-handed. No matter. There was no pride left by then and in December the Government rushed to sign with Mr. Weinberger what has been called a memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Weinberger got almost everything he wanted from that agreement. He got access to British research and

technology which, we understand, will probably be classified by the Pentagon and, if it is useful and valuable, it will disappear for ever behind the wall of the star wars programme. In the Pentagon there is a gentleman called Hoppler and he has a list, not a little list, called the military critical technologies list. He classifies whatever he wants to classify and he will classify any research and technology that he needs for star wars.

Why cannot the memorandum by published? Why can it not be placed in the Library so that we can decide for ourselves whether there is any protection for British intellectual property rights and other rights? Quite apart from classification and far more important, Mr. Weinberger got Britain to become the first country to sign on the dotted line of the star wars programme. No other country has followed Britain's lead, although I understand that the Federal Republic of Germany may sign fairly soon.

In this debate much has been said about research. It has been said that star wars is all right and is all about research, that in 10 years there may be a problem but everything is all right now and everybody is in favour of research. "Research", as Dylan Thomas might have said, is a comfortable and cosy word. It conjures up nice warm images of slightly dotty chemical teachers and pipettes and bunsen burners and litmus papers being dipped into beakers. I am told that there is no litmus paper at the Lawrence Livermore laboratory in California. I have checked and found that the laboratory carries out laser lethality tests. The researchers fire particle beams which destroy matter itself and they or their cohorts detonate hydrogen bombs or certainly nuclear weapons—six have been detonated already—to experiment with one of the star wars systems. The researchers or their cohorts fire rockets to destroy rockets.

I accept that it may not be possible to draft a treaty to control fundamental scientific research in this field. I am the first to concede that no treaty could stop the manic outpourings from the mind of Dr. Edward Teller. I wish that that were possible, but it is not. Equations are of no use without technology, and technology is of no use unless it is tested and developed to find out whether it works. Instead of rushing into an endorsement of star wars, the Government and our European allies should have brought pressure upon the Americans to sit down with the Russians to negotiate a treaty to stop the tests, demonstrations and developments. As the Foreign Secretary said, they should be stopped before they gather an unstoppable momentum. With good will and application, it is possible to create by negotiation that kind of treaty, and a start could be made by agreeing to a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. That would not stop the star wars programme, but at least it would deal it a heavy blow. The Government do not even want a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

President Reagan has spoken of the immorality of nuclear weapons, and in that famous speech he said they should be made impotent and obsolete. That was the dream, but it rapidly became a nightmare. SDI has become star wars. To what are the Government committed? Are they committed to the dream? Do they believe that nuclear weapons are immoral? Do the Secretary of State for Defence and the Prime Minister believe that nuclear weapons should be made obsolete and impotent, or are the Government merely going along with the nightmare in order to make a few dollars and a few pounds?

We have heard little over the past months about the dream or the morality or the necessity to make nuclear weapons obsolete, but we have heard much about contracts and money and dollars. Unless a treaty is negotiated, soon there will be a development on both sides of offensive and defensive systems. The Americans will build their imperfect defence and no doubt the Russians, in their own way, will follow. The Americans will build offensive systems to get around the imperfect Russian defence and no doubt the Russians will build offensive systems to get around the imperfect American defence. President Reagan's nightmare will become a reality.

The Government stand condemned because they have abandoned the high road—if they were ever on it—and have taken the low road. They stand condemned because they meekly acquiesced in agreeing to a system and a strategy about which they had no prior notice and no consultation within NATO and with our allies. The Government stand condemned because all they can do now is grub around on their hands and knees on the sidewalk scratching about for a few soiled and tainted greenbacks.

7.16 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): In the midst of what is agreed to be an important and serious debate, I was astonished to hear the overblown language of the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). It is clear that on the Opposition Front Bench we have not one, but two Welsh windbags.

The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) asked about the absence of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I know that he would have liked to take part in this important debate, but he is accompanying Her Majesty the Queen on her state visit to Nepal, and that date was in his diary long before the Labour party decided to have this SDI debate.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) implied that three of the four Camp David points agreed in December 1984 between President Reagan and the Prime Minister, which remain the basis of the Government's policy and which have recently been reaffirmed by the State Department, have already been broken. That is not so. The United States research programme and our participation in it is at the heart of the debate. The first Camp David point, which the State Department subsequently reaffirmed, is that the United States and Western aim is not to achieve superiority, but to maintain the balance, taking account of Soviet developments. It underlines the need to continue the research effort in the West in order to match and to hedge against the well-established Soviet programme.

The Soviet programme is long-standing and extensive. There has been research by the United States over the same period, but it is a simple fact, which the House will recognise, that scientists will continue to investigate new technologies. The human mind cannot be prevented from thinking, inventing, exploring and expanding the potential of the future. Perhaps this potential will never be realised, or perhaps it will be fully implemented to the greater good of the international community, but in any case the process will continue. Surely, in a democratic system like ours, our people and our researchers and scientists cannot be prevented from being involved.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Renton: No. Another debate is about to begin. It would be the wish of hon. Members on both sides that I should not give way. The only reason why I do not give way is that a Labour-inspired debate is about to begin.

The technology that we are debating is at the forefront of knowledge. My hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Sir P. Wall), in his powerful speech, said that the United Kingdom must be involved in this type of technology if it is to remain an advanced industrial nation. We certainly should not underestimate the benefits of such research for contracts and jobs for this country. Two SDI contracts have already been concluded following signature of the memorandum of understanding, and others are nearing signature. I have to tell the right hon. Member for Llanelli that, for reasons of confidentiality, the House will understand why I cannot go into further detail.

The contract signed by Ferranti, Heriot Watt university and other organisations in the future will undoubtedly foster the prospects of additional jobs in high technology industries. I was surprised and pleased to hear the right hon. Member for Leeds, East say during a television broadcast at the weekend that he would not object to British researchers becoming involved in the US programme. Precisely a year ago my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister expressed the same sentiment, although perhaps more enthusiastically, to the United States Congress. Why, then, does the right hon. Gentleman cavil today at the Government's approach? I realise that a great soul like him—Emerson's words—has simply nothing to do with consistency.

Mr. Healey: We cannot and should not try to prevent companies or individuals from working in the American programme if they wish to do so. However, I object to the Government encouraging British scientists to leave programmes, such as the Alvey programme, which are vital to our future, to work in American defence industries, where the results of their researches may not be available for commercial use.

Mr. Renton: That is an area in which the right hon. Gentleman's little knowledge is very dangerous. We are at the beginning of an interesting phase in which involvement in the development of this technology—whether or not it comes to anything beyond the research stage—is important for key British companies. I am grateful for the support of the right hon. Member for Dudley, East (Dr. Gilbert), who is an ex-junior Defence Minister. I wish that he could persuade the ex-Secretary of State to his view.

The Government's approach is favoured by our allies. I must tell the right hon. Member for Leeds, East and the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) that the Germans and the Italians are already well advanced in considering participation. A German team, led by the Economics Minister, was recently in Washington, and they are moving towards a decision. Equally, the French have made it clear that while they do not wish to participate as a Government, private companies are free to do so.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Mr. Douglas) asked about technology sharing with the Soviet Union. The Americans have spoken of such collaboration, and President Reagan has envisaged technology being shared at an appropriate stage as offensive forces are reduced. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East dismisses that idea as impracticable. He is entitled to his opinion. The President has been steadfast in his view, and, given the choice between the right hon. Gentleman's judgment and belief in the President's sincerity, I know which I would choose. Of course, that stage has not yet arrived, and may not be reached for many years. However, to dismiss it as impracticable is a sad reflection of the traditional ostritch-like tactics of the Opposition.

The Americans have made an equally far-sighted offer that the two sides join in an open laboratory arrangement and provide information on their research programmes and facilities for mutual benefit. The Russians have not yet responded, but we hope that they will. As many who have spoken in the debate have said, the time is ripe for new initiatives. That approach could lead to a breakthrough on verification—one of the core elements in any successful arms control agreement.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said that the SDI could be the rock on which the disarmament talks founder. That is clearly the Soviet position. The USSR says that if the United States does not abandon its research programme it may not agree to cut its nuclear forces. Is that acceptable, or even logical? I believe that it is neither. For years, while research into ballistic missile defence-related technology has been taking place in both countries, neither side has postulated that force reductions were dependent upon stopping such research. The Russians signed and ratified SALT I and the ABM treaties in 1972. In 1979 they welcomed and signed the SALT II agreement. They re-entered negotiations — albeit belatedly—on nuclear forces in the 1980s. Yet during all that time, research continued. Did they, on those grounds, refuse to participate? They did not.

There can be no reason in principle why the work by both sides, which has been in progress for some time, should suddenly, at the Soviet whim, become a stumbling block to arms control agreements. For its part, the US has made it clear that the SDI research programme will be conducted in full conformity with the provisions of the ABM treaty and other legal obligations.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) both for his important speech and for his statement —with which I agree—that there is no conflict between the SDI and the ABM treaty, at least for the next few years and while research continues. If the SDI yields positive results, the United States will, after consulting its allies, consult and negotiate with the Soviet Union. Its aim in those exchanges would be to establish how deterrence could be enhanced through a greater reliance by both sides on defensive systems.

If we are to move towards a mix of offensive and defensive systems, the Americans want any transition to be a co-operative process with the Russians—hence the importance of negotiating about deployments. However, the results of research, and therefore of any such negotiations, may well be many years away. At Geneva, in the meantime, the Americans have already called for bilateral dialogue about the way in which offensive and defensive forces relate. The Russians appear reluctant to take up that offer, but if they seek more clarity about the strategic future that dialogue could help them.

I stress that the purpose of the Western alliance remains wholly defensive. We have pledged ourselves never to use any weapons other than in response to an attack. Those weapons exist to deter the potential aggressor. Given our overall defensive purpose, the attractions of a world in

which defences may come to play a greater part in maintaining deterrence are understandable. That point was well and clearly made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson). The results of US and Soviet research will not be known for many years. The debate on stategic stability and defence will, meanwhile, continue. We accept and welcome that. There are questions to be asked and, at the appropriate time, to be answered.

Mr. Gorbachev's recent proposals are disappointing in some areas, because part of his position remains unchanged. However, there may prove to be new and interesting elements, and at least the Soviet leadership may now be prepared to do business at Geneva. That is where its intentions must be tested and its rhetoric converted into concrete results. I shall be going to Geneva next week to address the conference on disarmament. I expect to meet both the US negotiating team and the Soviet representatives. I shall tell them that the Government applaud their efforts and look forward to their success.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland said that the Liberals would vote against the Government amendment and for the Labour motion. What will the SDP do? Its Members have been conspicuous by their absence. However, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) said on 12 June:

"Let us have research and development by all means."—[*Official Report*, 12 June 1985; Vol. 80 c. 936.]

It will be interesting to see whether there is a split in the alliance over its defence policy. If so, it will not be the first time, and it will not be the last.

The other thing that has distinguished the debate is the virulent anti-Americanism of the Labour party. The right hon. Member for Leeds, East implied that the SDI research was in some sense anti-British. What has come over instead has been the typical anti-Americanism of the Labour party. In a speech to the Dutch Labour party last Friday, the leader of the Labour party reaffirmed his total opposition to the deployment of cruise missiles in Holland, thus rejecting that part of the offensive nuclear shield which has been NATO policy since 1979. Today the Labour party will vote against research and defensive systems. If it were to have its way, that would indeed be the shameful and humiliating position for the United Kingdom of which the right hon. Member for Llanelli spoke. If Labour were ever to be in government again, Britain would indeed be left to go naked into the conference chamber. It is for that reason that I hope the House will vote overwhelmingly against the motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 202, Noes 272.

Division No. 79] **[7.30 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James

Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Sean Hughes and
Mr. Ron Davies

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Dykes, Hugh
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spence, John
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the extensive Soviet research effort in ballistic missle defence; agrees that the Strategic Defence Initiative research programme is prudent in the light of this effort; and welcomes the participation of United Kingdom industry and research institutions in that programme.

Private Tenants

7.43 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I beg to move,

• That this House asserts the right of private tenants to a secure home in good repair at a reasonable rent free from harassment or neglect, the right to buy from a non-residential absentee landlord, the right to manage for both tenants and leaseholders of flats and the right collectively to buy the freehold for leaseholders of flats; calls for a review of rent regulation so as to close loopholes in the Rent Act; recognises the need to further improve privately rented property; and notes that the Government has savaged public housing programmes and now contemplates the end of socialist rent control.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): I should inform the House that Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Rooker: This debate will obviously be short and I shall not abuse the privilege of kicking off by making an excessively long speech.

This debate is as much about decent housing, choice and fairness as the recent Second Reading debate on the Housing and Planning Bill. About 2 million families remain in private tenancies. Their rights are few and need to be strengthened. They should have the right to a secure home, but many have not.

As an extension of choice, private tenants should have the right to buy from absentee landlords. By its nature, the scheme cannot be as uniform as that in the private sector, in which there are exceptions even today, but as in the public sector the majority of tenants will be included in the scheme.

Minimum standards should be set in the private sector which, if not met, would give tenants the right to require a nominated housing association or in some cases a local authority to buy out the existing landlord — for the purpose of action, not inaction, as we are not interested in property passing from one landlord to another and remaining in a dilapidated state. The new rights, of course, would not apply to people letting all or part of their own home, but only to genuine absentee landlords.

Private tenants who choose—I emphasise that word —to remain tenants should have the same rights as those that the Labour party proposes for council tenants to control the management of their homes, especially blocks of flats.

Private tenants also require a new legal right to temporary accommodation while repairs or improvements are carried out. This should not be an aid to landlords to winkle out secured tenants but a positive legal right so that tenants have the security and certainty of knowing that they will be returning to their homes.

If anyone doubts that that new right is required, I should make it clear that Rachmanism is alive and well in 1986 and being operated by Riverside Property Services, 16A Cazenove road, London N16. Late last year, that company purchased No. 38 Mirabel road, SW6, in the Fulham area of London. Two flats in the house were occupied by secured tenants. The property is now being improved with the aid of a council grant. The landlord persuaded the tenants of the first floor flat to leave, but Mrs. Edith Ashby, a 76-year-old widow whom I visited on Monday, and a secured tenant, is now having her home rebuilt

[Mr. Rooker]

around her. There is no heating, no electricity, no bathroom and no security. Her furniture has been piled up in a room and covered with plastic sheeting.

No offer of temporary accommodation was made to Mrs. Ashby and she was told that the work would take four days. That was three weeks ago. She was offered £5,000 to leave, but refused because she wanted to stay in her home, so the landlord simply left her there and sent the building contractor in—a classic case of harassment of an elderly lady to get her out of her secure tenancy.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) *rose*——

Mr. Rooker: I know that I may antagonise and annoy Conservative Members, but this is a short debate and in the interests of others who wish to speak I do not intend to give way to anyone.

After the intervention of Nick Raynsford, director of the SHAC London Housing Aid Centre, the landlord offered to let Mrs. Ashby put her bed in a room in the first floor flat. She now also has her cooker and television, but the conditions in which she is expected to live are obscene and a scandal in 1986. Potential buyers of the first floor flat are given the key to walk off the street willy-nilly into the home in which Mrs. Ashby is now trying to live. If ever there was an example showing that reform is needed, that is it.

It is well known that there is widespread evasion of the Rent Acts. Evasion takes place daily, and there is evidence that more than half the re-lets fall outside the protection of the Rent Acts. When the Select Committee investigated four years ago, the evidence showed that private sector rents would at least double if controls were removed. I gave the Minister notice of this question a week ago. Is that assessment still valid?

Ministers blame the Rent Acts for empty property, but they give no figures. In 1977, when there were 550,000 empty homes in the private sector — the figure is virtually the same today—research suggested that only 8,000 to 31,000 out of more than 500,000 empty homes were empty as a result of the Rent Act. After the infamous Rent Act 1957, which was supported by the Liberals at that time, homes for renting disappeared faster than before—250,000 in 1961 compared with 180,000 in 1956. We want the Rent Acts to be strengthened, not weakened.

Mr. Butterfill:

Mr. Rooker: Very interesting. I look forward to the hon. Member's speech.

We want the Rent Act to be strengthened, not weakened. All tenants and licensees of non-resident landlords should have security of tenure, except when a genuine short-term let has been registered with a local housing authority, such as holiday lets and student lets.

Before I come to Conservative plans to abolish rent control—they clearly exist—I shall deal very briefly with two aspects of our policy so that there can be no misunderstanding among those who wish to invest in rented housing.

First, we support shared ownership where there is and can be an element of private renting. It was, after all, invented by a Labour local authority in Birmingham as a half-and-half scheme, but, like many good ideas from local government, it has been taken on board by central Government and ruined. They also ruined enveloping. We want this form of tenure to flourish, and we would arrange the necessary guarantees to encourage investment. That is missing at the moment. The full opportunities of shared ownership, whether on a 50:50 or on a 25:75 basis have never been explored or exploited as a form of tenure by individuals or indeed by institutions.

The second aspect is assured tenancies. They operate outside the Rent Acts, with a landlord approved by the Secretary of State. They apply now only to newly constructed dwellings. We have no plans to abolish this form of tenancy. Our policy document, "Homes for the future", makes no reference to assured tenancies and that can be taken to mean that we will maintain the system. Although it was brought in by the Conservatives, they, not the Opposition, have effectively killed it off with high interest rates, high land prices and, above all, the removal of capital allowances in the 1984 Budget.

We would prefer for example, that the moneys from British workers' pension funds were invested in assured tenancy homes rather than exported to create jobs abroad. We would want homes to be built and rented under the assured tenancy scheme. I make that quite clear.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: No.

I make our stance quite clear so there can be no confusion outside. That is a point which was made last autumn and which I understand needs making from the Dispatch Box.

Even with the evidence of the Rent Act 1957, the Government want to decontrol rents. When will they do it? Two million families have the right to know. We want to make it quite clear tonight that the Labour party will oppose the abolition of rent control. We will reimpose controls at the first opportunity.

I shall quote some examples of attempts by the Conservative party to rewrite history and change opinion on this subject. I start with a quotation from the other place, which has been quite active on this in the past few years. On 23 June 1982, Tory peers were falling over themselves to call for the abolition of rent control. The Government spokesman at the time was sympathetic. A year later, on 10 October 1983, a Bill to abolish rent control was introduced and debated in the other place. Influential Tories such as Lord Harris of High Cross—it is no good anyone arguing that he is not an influential Tory

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Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): He is a Cross Bencher.

Mr. Rooker: Ah, but listen to what I have to say. In my book, being a Cross Bencher does not mean that one cannot be a Tory. Lord Harris and Social Democratic peers queued up to call for abolition, and the Government spokesman said:

> "The Government have some sympathy with the points of view expressed by . . . Lord Harris of High Cross and by other noble Lords"—[*Official Report House of Lords*, 10 November 1983; Vol. 444, c. 1028.]

They were calling for the abolition of rent controls. Just one month later, at the Conservative party conference, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), as he will remember because he was then the Minister for Housing, spoke of the

> "need to re-examine the private rented sector".

A few months later, on 2 March, in a debate in this place on a motion proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), the Minister who is to reply tonight, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Wimick) whether the Government would return to rent decontrol as it was under the 1957 Act. My hon. Friend could not get a straight answer from the Minister. All that we got was:

"We are examining all legislation that affects private renting . . . We must try to establish conditions in which investors and landlords have the confidence . . . to commit resources".—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1984; Vol. 55, c. 553-4.]

We are entitled to ask what has been happening since.

On 9 October 1984, the nation got the personal manifesto of the chairman of the Conservative party at a fringe meeting of the Selsdon group. He said:

"I think there is at least a good chance that the great inflation, like all its predecessors, is coming to an end. If that is indeed so —and we are brave enough at some time in the future to reform the Rent Acts—some interesting consequences might follow. Rented housing—homes for hire—might well compete with houses to buy. The latter would have lost their attraction as hedges against inflation. And positive real interest rates could narrow the rent/mortgage differential."

What was that other than an invitation——

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): A good speech.

Mr. Rooker: A good speech, yes, effectively calling for the abolition of rent control.

In November that year, the then Secretary of State, at the annual conference of the National Housing and Town Planning Council, said that he wanted

"a bipartisan reform of the Rent Act".

Presumably the bipartisan approach to the state earnings-related pension scheme was still fresh in his mind. Later that month, the Minister for Housing, the hon. Member for Eastbourne, wrote to me saying:

"we have been looking at ways we might stimulate the contribution of this sector".

He continued:

"Parliament would be informed in the usual way".

That is the end of the bipartisan approach.

In May 1985, there was an extremely interesting piece from the hon. Member for Horsham (Sir P. Horden) in the *Daily Telegraph*. It was long, well thought out and carefully argued. His final sentence read:

"To repeal the Rent Acts would be the most important single measure the Government could take."

He is a highly respected influential thinker on the Tory Back Benches. He knows what he is talking about when money is involved.

Last summer, we got a string of leaks about the Queen's Speech. It was said in the *Financial Times*, the paper which reported most of the leaks best of all, that the hon. Member for Eastbourne had indeed convinced the Prime Minister that this was the course to follow. Other senior Ministers obviously prevailed. I have to put on record the telling paragraph in a piece by Mr. Peter Riddell, who wrote:

"The discussion on the issue highlights the personal style of decision making in the current government which by-passes normal channels and the Cabinet structure."

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): Ridiculous.

Mr. Rooker: The Minister says that Mr. Riddell's assertion is ridiculous. We now come to the present Minister, and his very important speech of 9 February.

Mr. Gow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rooker: I have mentioned the hon. Gentleman twice and, as an act of courtesy, and only to him, I shall give way.

Mr. Gow: I just want to correct the hon. Gentleman. I had the advantage of being present at these discussions, which was an advantage not conferred on the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Or on Peter Riddell.

Mr. Gow: The decision about this matter was taken perfectly properly and perfectly normally and there was a full discussion of it by the Cabinet.

Mr. Rooker: So there was a discussion and we are told that the Cabinet threw it out. The Cabinet obviously looked over the abyss of rent control and said, "This is not a runner."

I come back to the speech of the present Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, who on 9 February said:

"Reviving the private rented sector isn't going to be easy. We will need to gain the confidence of tenants and landlords. And it cannot be done now. There is little point in pushing forward major legislation halfway through a Parliamentary term, because of the destructive attitudes which the Labour party is sure to take. But I hope that we will remove the Socialist controls that keep rents at artificially low levels—for new tenants, not existing tenants".

The word "But" indicates that this will happen before rather than after the next general election. That is the clear implication of what the Minister said. Initially he was saying that major legislation could not be introduced before the next election because my hon. Friends and myself could put the kybosh on it, and he knows it. However, he hopes to remove the Socialist controls that keep rents at artificially low levels for new tenants. The chances are that before the next general election we will have rent decontrol for new tenants.

Two days after that speech there was an interesting supplementary question from the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who asked:

"In view of the fact that there is quite a lot of pressure now to improve the prospects in the private rented sector of housing"——

hon. Members will be aware of the kind of pressure that I have cited——

"to make new housing stock available to the general public, and as the Housing Bill is in Committee, would it not be a good idea if some amendments were put forward and that the Government agreed to them?"

All I need say is that on the last amendment that was moved yesterday morning the Government were defeated by 12 votes to five.

In reply to that question the Prime Minister said:

"I recognise the importance of my hon. Friend's supplementary question and his desire to increase the stock of houses in the private rented sector. That is something to which we must give our attention. Whether this comes within the long title of the Housing Bill"——

this is from a Member of Parliament of 30 years' standing——

"is not for me to say."—[*Official Report*, 7 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 781.]

But Ministers can amend the long title of the Bill any time they want. In short, there is abundant evidence that the Conservatives are up to something in relation to rent control.

Being another person's landlord for a crude commercial profit is an unacceptable way of earning a living, and that

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is why rent controls are required. The Conservative Member who said that the abolition of rent controls would be fine in the long run but that in the short run no Tory MPs would be left in London was speaking the truth.

The national average of private rented tenure is about 10 per cent.—it is now probably below that——

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire: Will the hon. Gentleman give way.

Mr. Rooker: I shall not, because I am about to conclude.

The top six constituencies in the private rented sector are all in inner London. Fulham happens to be in sixth place. Unfortunately—I say that because we all regret the death of Martin Stevens—Fulham has no one here to represent it tonight. But at 33 per cent., Fulham has three times the national average of constituents in the private rented sector. What are the Government planning for them after the next election that they are not prepared to say beforehand? The people of Fulham are in a unique position to test the popularity of the Conservative call for freedom to raise rents—perhaps to double or triple them —in the private sector. They demand an answer, and so does this House.

8.3 pm

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"asserts the need for a healthy and reviving private rented sector with an adequate supply of sound homes to rent as being in the best interests of tenants and landlords and those looking for accommodation; further asserts the need for improved statutory safeguards to ensure proper management of privately owned blocks of flats; and notes that provision for capital expenditure on housing was increased in the Public Expenditure White Paper.".

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) made a characteristically forceful speech to which I enjoyed listening. In particular, I welcome what he said about shared ownership. Perhaps in Committee we shall be able to explore further exactly what he meant. He also gave a clear assurance on assured tenancies.

My first principle is that any Housing Minister, from whatever party he or she comes, must surely want to see that all existing housing stock is as fully used as possible.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It depends on the condition.

Mr. Patten: Of course it does. Empty homes, whether in the public or private sectors, are a waste. Local authorities estimate—these are the only estimates we have—that in England, 545,000 private sector homes were empty in April 1985. Nearly 100,000 of them were in London, where the problem of homelessness is greatest. Many of those homes, but not all—even some needing refurbishment—could be let to people who need them if landlords were not inhibited by the effects of the Rent Acts.

The private rented sector once provided homes for the vast majority of the British people, but that sector has been in decline for about 70 years since 1914. As recently as 1951, there were 6 million privately rented dwellings in England. Now there are perhaps only 1·7 million, and the number is falling fast. While we and the country at large welcome the huge rise in home ownership that has followed, it is a sad fact that in Britain alone of the major western countries there is no vigorous private rented sector for those who need it.

For example, in West Germany 36 per cent. of households rent from private landlords. In France the figure is 32 per cent., and in the United States it is 33 per cent. In Britain it is just 9 per cent. In those other countries, private renting is not the major political issue that it is in the United Kingdom. We must ask why that is so. To me it seems wrong to concentrate in the United Kingdom on two forms of tenures—owner-occupation and council renting—with precious little in between. We may not be able to agree on how to fill that gap, but it is wrong. The reasons for the decline are complex, but statutory controls are one of the reasons why we face this problem.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North) *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Patten: I shall by and large follow the line of the hon. Member for Perry Barr and give way as little as possible. I shall give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on many occasions in Standing Committee tomorrow, just as I gave way to him yesterday in Standing Committee and shall no doubt do so on many occasions in the future—*[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment tells me to steady on, and I shall do so.

I recognise, of course, that in the past, the private rented sector has been a political football. The history of attempts to achieve a political concensus on the issue is not exactly encouraging. We are probably all at fault, and I would be the first to admit it. People will say—the hon. Member for Perry Barr did so tonight—that decontrol was tried in 1957 and that it did not work. They will say that the sector declined very fast and that Rachmanism grew. But in 1986 we must accept that history need not repeat itself. We can learn the lessons of post-1957—I am prepared to do so—one of which, incidentally, was that the accelerated decline of the private rented sector in the late 1950s was more the result of slum clearance than of rent decontrol. The hon. Member for Perry Barr is to some extent under a misapprehension. In 1986, the sector is very different from what it was in 1957. Most private sector tenants are now single people rather than families.

Indeed, tenants are now much better protected by law against harassment then they were in the 1950s. No serious observer of the housing scene now believes that the public sector can provide all the resources necessary to tackle our housing problems. We must mobilise institutional and private resources as well to help meet housing need, particularly in our great cities. We should all try together to build at least that measure of consensus about the future of the private rented sector in which there is at least a role for building societies, major institutions, the Housing Corporation and the housing associations. If we can get that consensus that is a good start. There may also be a role for the private, responsible landlord, but if we could agree on the first measures, I should be happy to get that tonight.

In response to the hon. Member for Perry Barr, I make it clear beyond any doubt that we have no intention of removing the protection enjoyed by existing tenants. That mistake was made in 1957. The removal of the statutory controls of existing tenancies at the top end of the market

led to widespread evictions by the involuntary landlords —those who were not landlords by choice and took the opportunity to obtain vacant possession and sell out. However, if in future we want to encourage the private sector to make unused accommodation available for renting and to invest in accommodation for rent, it is essential that, for new lettings, rents should provide reasonable economic returns.

I hope that the hon. Member for Perry Barr will note what I am about to say because I am responding to his question. The Government have taken no decisions on what form any legislation to reduce controls over new tenancies should take. We are not proposing in this Parliament to introduce major legislation to recast the Rent Act. We are ready to listen and promote argument about what could and should be done. With that in mind, I was flattered to find my speech to the Young Conservatives gathered in Blackpool a couple of Sundays ago subjected to such interesting and close textual criticism and exegesis about what a comma here and a "but" there meant.

It was a curious experience for me, for the first time in my life, to walk on to a political platform and find balloons going up, paper darts, chanting. I could not understand why my appearance was the cue for such excitment in the hall. I was then told that they were waiting for my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who is not with us this evening.

I said in my speech about the Rent Acts:

"The need for reform is clear from the degrading scramble for accommodation which young people suffer in London and other big cities. It is clear when the law makes it senseless for landlords to let property except under the most restrictive conditions. And it is emphasised by the need to avoid the bizarre and socially damaging polarisation in our society between owner occupiers, and tenants in council occupation."

For some time, the Government have been concerned about the particular problems faced by the 500,000 or so households living in privately owned, long leasehold flats —two thirds of them are long leaseholders. Evidence has emerged of serious management problems in this sector, and that is why my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), the former Minister for Housing and Construction, set up in February 1984 the Nugee committee — under Mr. Nugee QC — to examine the issues. The committee presented its cogent, coherent and important report in November 1985. It has confirmed that there are serious problems in a significant proportion of blocks and has made numerous recommendations on how the Government should get ahead and tackle the problems. It is a complex report that deals with complex issues with major ramifications for many parts of the law that cannot be dealt with by a little amendment here and there.

The report throws up some interesting questions. First, what should the relationship between freeholder, tenants and managing agents be and what procedures should there be for appointing such agents? What remedies should the tenants have where the freeholder is not carrying out his obligations to maintain the block? Are there circumstances in which it would be right to allow long leaseholders collectively to buy the freehold, with for instance the important suggestion of a right of first refusal when the landlord wishes to sell? These are among the important issues raised by the report. I am considering them in consultation with my colleagues. One of our considerations is whether the reform of certain aspects goes far enough.

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): My hon. Friend is referring to the important 53 recommendations of the Nugee committee on which, as he knows, I had the honour and pleasure to serve. Does he agree that such recommendations must be brought into legislation as soon as possible, and will he refute the dishonesty of the Westminster, North Labour party, which says in a printed leaflet:

"Worst of all, the Government has refused to implement even the modest recommendations of the Nugee report."

Mr. Patten: I am happy to refute that — it is nonsense and has no foundation. The Government are looking at the recommendations of the Nugee committee, on which my hon. Friend served with such distinction, and we are intent on moving forward as quickly as we can in putting the most significant parts of the recommendations into effect and on some occasions perhaps even going further than the committee might have recommended.

I emphasise the role that the private rented sector can play in meeting housing needs if it is given the chance to do so. A vigorous private rented sector would widen housing choice, increase mobility and help to reduce homelessness. Empty flats and houses, whether in the public or private sector, are an affront to the homeless. With the help of all the Opposition parties, we can achieve some of these goals.

The hon. Member for Perry Barr and his colleagues have a particularly heavy social responsibility in looking at the future of privately rented flats and houses. I hope that we shall not have automatic immediate reactions with pledges to repeal this or that at the drop of a hat. The situation is far too serious for such a reaction. I hope that all Opposition Parties will open-mindedly join the debate, which I welcome because it is so important. However, even if they do, the Government cannot accept the motion.

8.19 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I welcome the Minister's suggestion that we should try to reach as much agreement as we can about the future of private rented property. Both sides of the House are aware that there is a need for more private rented homes. Owner-occupation may be a wonderful system for a great many people, but we all understand that it is not possible for some people, on sheer financial grounds, and in any case it is not appropriate for everybody.

In the Minister's famous speech on 9 February, I notice that he correctly pointed out that far too many young people are being pushed into owner-occupation far too early in life, simply because there is not enough rented property available. Equally, at the other end of the age scale, many elderly owner-occupiers would much rather be rid of the responsibility of owning their own homes if there were a rented sector into which they could move. We must provide more choice in housing.

There is probably a broad agreement on another matter. Local authorities cannot be left to be the only providers of rented accommodation. The policy of municipalisation is dead. At one time I supported it, but I do not any longer because of sheer practical experience. It is that which has probably killed off the policy of municipalisation.

There are the obvious management problems which many local authorities have in dealing with large numbers of properties. In any case, there is the problem of an unhealthy lack of choice if there is total monopoly in the

[Mr. John Cartwright]

hands of the local authority as the only providers of rented accommodation. That involves the bureaucratic rationing system, which we all know about and which we want to get away from. So there is undoubtedly a case for providing an alternative source of rented homes.

I part company from the Minister when he appears to believe that the solution is to try to breathe new life into the traditional private landlord system. First, the economics are against it as a means of providing any major improvement in the situation. To give developers a reasonable return on their capital investment would inevitably produce rents which would price the accommodation way beyond the means of a great many tenants, particularly those who are forced into private renting simply because they cannot afford to buy a home of their own.

I and my colleagues in the alliance reject the call for the deregulation of rents. We cannot believe that it can produce a tremendous explosion in the availability of private rented property. In the short term it is much more likely to drive up rents and produce more problems of homelessness.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman is perhaps over-estimating the price of new property coming on the market at unregulated rents, but will he take into account the fact that people would not be priced out of the market, because housing benefit would be available to the low-paid?

Mr. Cartwright: I shall come to that in a moment. There is a cut-off level for housing benefit. One cannot simply decide to rent as expensive a property as one would like and let the housing benefit providers take up the slack. It does not work like that.

The second problem of trying to revitalise traditional private landlordism is the general atmosphere that surrounds it. Again I pay tribute to the Minister for recognising that problem. In his much quoted, now required reading, "changing gear" speech on 9 February he said that the Conservative party in facing the problem would have to

> "win the battle to make renting and landlordism respectable again."

I am glad that he recognises the difficulty. He will have an uphill struggle in trying to tackle that problem. It is not like the other campaigns on which his party has been successful. It is not like encouraging more belief in owner-occupation. It is not like getting the right to buy off the ground. Both those campaigns were flowing with the tide of public opinion, spurred along by the financial advantage of mortgage tax relief. The atmosphere surrounding private landlordism is a much more difficult one to break through.

That does not mean that we should let the present decline continue. The numbers of houses available for private renting continue to go down. I suspect that that is not so much because of the Rent Acts as other factors. The attraction of the capital gains to be made by a landlord who sells for owner-occupation, for example, is a major factor in steadily reducing the stock of private rented homes. The sheer fact of slum clearance also reduces the numbers available. So the steady reduction in the number of private rented homes increases pressure on council properties and waiting lists at a time when they are in no position to take up the extra demand.

We know that there is a steady decline in the condition of private rented property, and there is an excessive use of loopholes — the holiday lets, the non-exclusive licences and all those other devices which are now more common than ordinary lettings and which make life so difficult for the young seeking private accommodation.

There are alternative solutions, and one is the extension of the right to buy, which is mentioned in the Opposition's motion. When it comes to things like blocks of tenanted flats, which are often in a poor condition, I am not attracted by the individual's right to buy. That is not a credible way of tackling the problem. But I do not see why a housing association should not be given the right to buy from a private landlord if a majority of the tenants in the block of flats decide that that is what they would like to do. That might be a registered housing association, or the tenants in a block might get together to form their own housing association or co-operative.

Mr. John Patten: Would the hon. Gentleman also welcome the involvement of building societies if they became progressively involved in private renting?

Mr. Cartwright: I shall come to that in a moment.

The idea of the right to buy for housing associations would involve little, probably no, public sector investment in terms of providing the capital. Perhaps these would have to be loans or loan guarantees, and certainly there would be a need for straightforward assistance on repair, rehabilitation and improvement, but it would provide a much better solution than trying to give individual tenants a right to buy or enabling tenants, in the Minister's words "to negotiate with their landlords about the level of their rents."

I come now to the rather different approach which has been mentioned by both Front Bench spokesmen — building on the assured tenancy scheme. I thought that the assured tenancy scheme had the germ of a good idea. I welcomed what the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said about the Labour party's attitude towards it, but there are three things wrong with that scheme. First, there is no effective Government investment in it. There was only the tax concession on the capital allowances and that, as we know, was removed in the Finance Act 1984, which effectively crippled the whole thing.

Secondly, the assured tenancy approach was limited to new building, and there is a crying need to encourage new private investment in the repair and rehabilitation of the existing private rented stock. Thirdly, there was no real basis of protection for tenants under the assured tenancy scheme. There was no protection against unreasonable eviction or rent rises.

However, there is a way forward involving the use of long-term index-linked mortgage arrangements. Building societies have found it possible to offer long-term index-linked mortgages and to on-lend the money at about a 4 per cent. real terms rate of interest. Index-linked mortgages offer an ideal way of funding that sort of activity, because rents tend to go up with the rate of inflation. Our calculations suggest that a £30,000 home financed in that way could be let at a rental of £44·50 a week. That is much higher than the fair rent level, but it is much less than the £70 a week or so which would be needed to service a £30,000 loan at a 12·5 per cent. interest rate. It is, however, clearly higher than the market can

stand, so there is a gap to be bridged between what is a reasonable return on capital for even long-term pension funds insurance money and things of that sort, and what fair rents can produce.

I cannot see why the Government should not seek to bridge that gap. If the Government provided a subsidy of 25 per cent. of the interest costs in the example that I have given, the rent of £44·50 would come down to £36 a week. Again that is high, but it is not unreasonable in many parts of the country. Alternatively, the Government could subsidise initial capital construction, although that is a less flexible approach. Clearly, even under my proposals, there would be a need to extend the high rent provisions of the housing benefit regulations to bring that sort of expensive housing within the reach of low-income families in the housing stress areas.

There is undoubtedly a cost to the Treasury in all this. I can see the Minister already nervously eyeing Treasury responses, but we already have public investment, through mortgage tax relief, in the owner-occupied sector. We already have substantial public investment in the traditional council sector. Therefore, I cannot see why there should not be some sensible public investment, used as leverage to obtain far larger private investment, in order to provide us with a new system of private rented accommodation. The tenants would have the benefit of approved landlords—housing associations, trusts and co-operatives and, yes, possibly approved private landlords if they could meet stringent standards of performance and ensure that they were treating their tenants decently and fairly. That does offer a way forward.

There is a measure of agreement here across a wide political spectrum. The Minister would be far better advised to tackle the problem in that way than to put back the clock and recreate 19th century private landlordism, which is going, and which ought not to be rescued.

8.28 pm

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): I had a problem tonight because I had a clash of interests. A major meeting is taking place on my constituency on the future management of Hampstead Heath. I chose to be here because private tenancies are a subject on which I have been campaigning for 16 years. I strongly believe in the rights of those who live in mansion flats. My parents lived all their married lives in mansion flats. I lived the first 40 years of my life in typical inner London blocks, with highly reputable landlords, such as the Prudential and London County Freehold and Leasehold Properties—the old key flats. The flats had equally reputable managing agents.

Alas, that no longer happens. From about the beginning of the 1960s the position changed because of a combination of the effects of the Rent Acts since the first world war and other factors. On the scene came what I can only describe as disgraceful landlords, such as Freshwater, Mr. Stern and the Bergers, who had no concern for their tenants, and agents with just a concern for their fees. That feature is still very much with us. Tenants are concerned mainly about neglected maintenance and inflated and sometimes phoney service charges.

I have followed this cause since I became a Member in 1970. My first opportunity to do anything practical was in 1972, in the Housing Finance Bill, when I succeeded in carrying a new clause against the wishes of my party, with the Opposition's aid. The Government decided that they would insert a clause, in better terms than my measure, to help tenants especially, with respect to the auditing and inspection of service charge accounts. That was a start, but it was not enough.

In 1974 we had an interesting and friendly Committee on the Housing Bill. Perhaps it was friendly because the Government did not have a majority on the Committee. We had long sittings. On 11 June 1974 the right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) rebuffed my amendments. I told the right hon. Gentleman that I would refer to him in this debate, not in an unpleasant spirit, but in a spirit of chiding and regret. He said:

"the kind of headings that I have indicated already would rank high in the review that I should wish to achieve with a view to future legislative and policy action." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee B*, 11 June 1974; c. 385.]

The right hon. Gentleman, supported by Mr. Douglas-Mann, the then Labour Member who became an SDP Member, agreed in a further debate that it was necessary to improve the position. Unfortunately, after that short Parliament, Labour having won the election, nothing happened. Between 1974 and 1979 there was a substantial Labour majority, but nothing happened.

It therefore fell to those of us who had a hand in drafting the 1979 housing legislation to do something. The right hon. Member for Brent, East pooh-poohed in a gentle way some proposals as being too difficult or needing further examination. My right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley) and I were able to convince those who were advising us about drafting the Bill that these measures could be undertaken. Our provisions were therefore included in the Bill and we made a reasonable amount of progress on a variety of improvements.

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that that part, like many other parts, of what became the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 was drafted by the previous Government, under whom I was Minister for Housing and Construction?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: The right hon. Gentleman will recall that, in spite of having had the opportunity, he did little about service charges. Because I was not privy to the private papers of the Labour Government, I have no idea of exactly what happened. I can say only that the provision was not in a form that would have satisfied my right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling or me that it would help tenants. I am not attacking the right hon. Member for Brent, East. I do so sometimes, but I would not dream of doing so when he is under threat.

A variety of measures need improvement. We have heard of the need to set up a sinking fund, but the problem is who will look after it. Certainly many of the managing agents who manage some of these properties could not be trusted with the administration of sinking funds. They or the owners would do a quick moonlight flit and the tenants who had paid their money would be left with nothing.

I begin to think that there is some co-operation throughout the House on the sale of blocks of flats. I have always believed that, if a landlord intends to sell his block of flats, the tenants should be given the right of first refusal. That provision is not yet law. Nugee talks about that, but pressure can make it actually happen.

A large block of property in Belsize Park in my constituency, which included houses and flats, was owned by the Church Commissioners. They were about to sell the

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

property for about £3 million to, I think, a Luxembourg or Channel Isles registered company. The tenants came to me. I made representations to the Church Commissioners, saying that their action was wrong and that they should give tenants the opportunity to purchase at the same price. Following a certain amount of pressure and public aggravation, the Church Commissioners agreed. The properties are now owned by the Belsize United Tenants Association. The tenants are their own landlords, and life is much better and happier. There may be difficulties, and one must consider how to overcome them, but we should not wait too long before saying that this policy is accepted across the whole political spectrum.

Tenants need to know the proper name and address of landlords and agents in the United Kingdom. I was unable to get that provision accepted. All too frequently, the landlord is abroad or there is a change of landlord or agent and the tenants cannot find the person on whom documents should be served. Nugee refers to that.

We need better managing agents. Between 1942 and 1952 I worked for a London firm of estate agents managing commercial and residential property. In those days managing agents were reputable and experienced and they knew what should be done to look after and to reconcile the joint interests of tenants and landlords. Most of them did that. I welcome the code of practice which the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has produced showing what responsibilities managing agents should have. Perhaps, like the Highway Code, one might need to make that code an adjunct to any legislation that results from Nugee's recommendations. We need tighter tendering for works so that tenants can match, if they wish, an estimate produced by the landlord.

Mr. Nugee, who is one of my distinguished constituents, was asked to chair the committee of inquiry on which my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) served. The Committee made some interesting and useful comments. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction made two points clear. He knocked on the head the lie that the Government have rejected Nugee's recommendations. My hon. Friend said that action will be taken after he has carried out the necessary consultations.

I say to my hon. Friend the Minister: do not take too long. Too much thought paralyses action. He will find, if he has not already done so, that great barriers will be erected in the Department by officials and legal advisers. That is what happened in 1971, and since, and I suggest that the position has not changed. The officials will not act in this way for obstructive reasons. They will say, "Minister, this will be difficult." We have all seen such action. My hon. Friend should be his normal resolute self and state that this is the policy that he wants. It is amazing how quickly difficulties disappear and draft clauses appear once that is done.

Mr. Wheeler: As my hon. Friend has referred to civil servants in the Department of the Environment, will he concede that the work of the Nugee committee, which took place over many months, involved the wholehearted service of members of the Department of the Environment, who provided the secretariat? He may agree that their learning experience was such that perhaps the advice to our hon. Friend the Minister is now of such quality that early results may flow.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I am an eternal optimist. I was fascinated when I saw that we were to debate this subject. I realised that it would give my hon. Friend the Minister a chance to say something about the Nugee committee, and I hoped that there would be a useful exchange of views. I wondered why we were debating this subject in Opposition time. I thought perhaps the Opposition were at last concerned about private tenants. Alas, having been disillusioned on some occasions, I have been even more disillusioned today.

I have a news release from Walworth road from the Labour party campaign and communications directorate. It is dated February 18 and says:

"Fulham housing cases to be raised in Parliament."

We are told:

"Two cases of elderly women tenants living in appalling conditions, in privately rented homes in Fulham, will be raised during tomorrow's (Wednesday's) debate".

We have heard about one of the those elderly women, and we are to hear about Mrs. Griffiths from the hon. Gentleman who is to reply for the Opposition. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr. (Mr. Rooker) spoke about this matter being taken up by a Mr. Raynsford, who was director of the Shelter Housing Aid Centre. Unfortunately, the news release is not quite as coy as that. It calls him the prospective Labour candidate in the forthcoming by-election. The cat is let out of the bag. If he is to be the candidate at the by-election, that document may have started his election expenses running. I think that that needs to be watched.

Those who live in Fulham or elsewhere know that the Labour party has done precious little for private tenants when it has had the chance. It had the opportunity on two occasions and did absolutely nothing. I hope that private tenants will not be conned—I do not think that they will be—into again thinking that the Labour party cares for them.

It is a pity that the three distinguished Labour Members, the hon. Members for Perry Barr, for Norwood, (Mr. Fraser) and for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), did not go to look at tenants living in deplorable conditions in Labour council flats and in flats where Labour councils have failed to spend the money allocated, such as Camden, which has squealed year upon year but which last year underspent its capital by £8 million and this year will underspend by £10 million or more.

Mr. John Patten: Or indeed failed to collect the rents, which is a characteristic of boroughs such as Camden, or Walsall, which has such a wretched record outside London.

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg: I agree with my hon. Friend and I hope that those matters will be put right on 8 May. I may have an entry in the "Guiness Book of Records" which I would like removed. It says that I am the only Conservative leader of the London borough of Camden. I should like to see that entry disappear on 8 May.

I believe that if the public realised the hypocrisy of the Labour party's policy document and the crocodile tears they have shed, they would realise that the only party that has ever done anything practical, not just made speeches, for tenants is the Conservative party.

8.44 pm

Mr. Reg Freeson (Brent, East): I shall not follow the last part of the remarks of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg), but I would like to make one or two observations on the main part of his speech which related to the problems of tenants of what are mostly called mansion blocks. They are primarily located in certain parts of inner London, some in my constituency, many in the hon. Gentleman's constituency and in Paddington and Westminster.

I think that the hon. Gentleman overstated his criticism of past failure to act on this matter. It is perfectly true that only limited legislative reforms were introduced in the Housing Act 1972 with the backing of the then Labour Opposition, as he readily acknowledged. Further changes were introduced in the Housing Act 1974 and some were published in a Bill before the 1979 election, which fell with that election but which were picked up again in the Housing Act 1980. Therefore, there were certain legislative changes.

It is also true that when I was a Minister I found some of the difficulties of dealing with this area in law and in practice that have subsequently been experienced by Conservative Ministers. It is interesting to read and to hear references to the Nugee report. I welcome that report and its recommendations. I certainly hope that those recommendations will be built upon.

I can reveal that a similar study was attempted in-house in the Department of the Environment while I was a Minister. We were not inactive, but I came up against the genuine complexities and the kind of cautionary advice and noises to which the hon. Gentleman has referred. That in-house report was nearing completion when the 1979 election was called.

I had hoped at that time, and announced not long before the 1979 election was called, that we would formulate a policy and legislate as soon as possible for what I described as collective-tenant purchase, which has been referred to by the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright). I should like to see the recommendations built upon. I have to say quite bluntly that, after all the thinking, all the work and all the advocacy — no matter how difficult this area is — it is about time that a policy decision was taken at a time during the Session when legislation could be introduced. That was not the position in 1979.

The legislation should empower tenants to set up their own housing associations and at least have the first right of refusal when the property is up for sale, or empower them to commission a housing association with good management agents, experience and know-how to act on their behalf. I would take it further and say that if it is at all possible in law we should not leave it at the first right of purchase. It should be possible to build into the law the right of tenants, not just in mansion blocks but elsewhere, to purchase collectively the blocks of flats or groups of properties where there is bad management.

If I may reflect on the history, that idea was set out as a policy objective — it was never achieved — in the Labour party's 1973 programme document which preceded the 1974 election. It was based upon a paper that I prepared at that time.

I readily confess with hindsight — I have confessed long since — that what was then seen as a basic and sensible proposition posed many legal complexities. I hope that those problems have now been dealt with and I urge that whatever else is done, the most radical measures would be to give those rights to tenants collectively, not just in mansion blocks, but elsewere too.

I am tempted to say that a similar right should be given to tenants in publicly owned flats where there is consistently bad or inadequate management. Tenants of local authority estates should have the right to purchase or bring in managing agents or a housing association to act on their behalf. This is not the first time that I have put that point.

If the Minister will concentrate on the general proposition put forward by my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), which was supported by the hon. Member for Woolwich, and will build on the assured tenancy policy to deal with the supply side of housing and leave well alone rent regulation and security of tenure, the threatened confrontation that we have detected from Bills in the other place and from speeches of various members of the Conservative party can be avoided.

I am not saying that there should be no reform of rent regulation and security of tenure; there is always scope for that. Confrontation emerges when there is an argument in favour of complete deregulation and, because of the reaction to that from the Opposition, there is a hauling into the trenches and the Government say, "Do not touch the Rent Acts because we fear a repeat of the 1957 experience." We must avoid that confrontation. There can still be argument, but it must be sensible and constructive.

From some quarters of the Conservative party in the past two or three years and, more significantly, recently we have seen the threat of complete deregulation emerging. It lies with the Government to act and put forward proposals in response to the spirit in which my hon. Friend spoke. The Government should concentrate on the supply side and improve assured tenancies.

If we were to rely upon anything remotely like deregulation of rents, we would have an increase in rents of three or four times in London — that is already happening in lettings which are outside the Rent Acts, which have been the most significant lettings in recent years. A great deal of evidence was presented to the Select Committee on the Environment in 1981 and 1982 to confirm what many of us suspected, that even if there were deregulation there would still be inadequate incentive for new investment in private sector rented housing. Witnesses came before us and some of them were strong advocates of decontrol. My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) will recall that, because he was a member of the Committee. Even the strongest advocates of decontrol, after our exchanges and the study of the papers they put to the Committee, accepted that even with such rent increases in the private sector, there would still not be the return required to solve the problem of bad conditions and inadequate supply.

That view was so widespread that it was included in the report's conclusions. I shall not quote them because of lack of time.

Mr. Butterfill: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the reasons for lack of interest in investment is the fear that the Labour party might reintroduce controls? We must contrast our experience with that of other countries.

Mr. Freeson: The hon. Gentleman is making the usual generalised point. That was not the reason that was given.

[Mr. Freeson]

I am not saying that there were no criticisms. There were criticisms of the controls. I am examining the view expressed by those who strongly advocated complete decontrol and who projected the financial implications and the kind of rent levels. They were not considering what might happen five or 10 years later with changes in legislation. Those people accepted that the return would be insufficient to encourage investment, even if there were a completely free market.

I make that point strongly because advocates of the free market often argue that deregulation would produce the desired results. There is little or no evidence to support that in London. I do not speak for other parts of the country because, in any case, the proportion of rented accommodation elsewhere is different from that in London, and I do not think that it is significant.

The answer lies not in trying to go backwards but in trying to evolve new forms of ownership and management — housing associations — and developing the assured tenancy approach. Until the matter can be resolved with the Treasury, there will be no going forward. I said privately to my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr a moment ago that, apart from the rights and wrongs of decontrol, there is one main reason why the Government do not introduce changes along the lines he proposed. It is that the Treasury knows that if the Government were to try to do so they would be virtually compelled to change the housing benefit scheme to provide for a sharp increase in rents. A huge Budget provision would be required.

The main obstacle to the proposals is not political; it lies with the Treasury. Let us consider the present position. Housing associations have been pleading with the Treasury for the past four years to be allowed to make up for the cuts in public expenditure by drawing private finance into investment in rented accommodation. I am not talking about the marginal new initiatives on part ownership, leasehold for the elderly and such schemes. I am talking about fair rent housing. There is a rule-convention which the Treasury applies. It says that if private money is brought in beside public money, then, because public money is involved, the remainder must be classified as public expenditure. Do not ask me to understand what is beyond understanding. That is wholly unintelligible. The Treasury is blocking the opportunity to put millions of pounds into the provision of rented accommodation via housing associations. It is preventing the spreading of investment.

The only way to get confidence for the policy development outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr is to break the present blockage. If the Government would allow private resources to go towards the provision of rented housing now, to provide thousands of new homes now, we could be confident of the assured tenancy provisions and alternative forms of housing management and ownership which lie between local authority housing and owner-occupation, and we could develop such a policy. Despite detailed differences, we might find common ground. The responsibility lies with the Government immediately to remove the obstacle to private money coming to housing associations to provide more rented accommodation which is urgently needed in our inner city areas.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Six hon. Members are still hoping to speak in the debate and time is getting short, so I appeal for brief speeches.

9 pm

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): As someone who has played many sports at one time or another, I have learnt the hard way that it is essential to keep one's eye on the ball. Once a player takes his eye off the ball he is lost. In the context of this debate, the ball is the need to house the homeless.

Let me say at once that I believe that the Labour party means well. Labour Members start with the right intentions and with their eyes on the ball, anxious to house those in need. Unfortunately, their views become clouded and twisted by other factors, such as their dislike of landlords, capitalism, the profit motive, or whatever, and they lose sight of the central issue—they take their eyes off the ball. They become more interested in hounding the rich than in housing the poor. Tenants and would-be tenants become pawns in a political game.

A famous politician said:

"You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help small men by tearing big men down. You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by citing class hatred."

Those are the words of Abraham Lincoln, spoken well over 100 years ago, yet they are timeless. They are as true today as they were then.

Perhaps I could add to that quotation some words of my own: "You cannot provide more accommodation for those who need it by attacking those who provide it. You cannot force people, through legislation, to do things against their interest, because they will not do it. Nor should we expect them to, nor if they are honest with this House would any Member of the Opposition."

More housing will be provided in the private sector only if tenants and landlords are allowed to benefit. Indeed, they can both benefit, providing the matter is approached reasonably. The word "reasonable" occupies a central position in the law of this land. Many cases are decided on what is judged to be "reasonable" in a given set of circumstances. At first sight, the word seems to be a vague one on which to depend for so much of our law-making, yet its meaning is well understood, and, by and large, that system works. It works so well that in my more idealistic moments I sometimes wish that that could be the only law that we needed to deal with each other in all the various aspects of life. If that is a flight of fancy—sadly, I am afraid that it is—I am sure that we should all agree that at present we have far too much detailed legislation.

We are increasingly trying to legislate, not merely to provide a broad framework within which people can live and work, but to attempt in a detailed way to tell people how they should treat each other, behave towards one another and, almost, what they should think of each other. We are attempting the impossible, the unnecessary, the restricting and in many ways the deeply damaging. People just will not do it. They react against it and they are frequently repelled by the idea of being told by the state in such detail what they can or cannot do in circumstances where they rightly believe that they should be trusted to be reasonable. In those circumstances, people who would normally be reasonable, are not. Although that is sad, I find it difficult to blame them.

Clearly, there will always be a minority of bad landlords just as there will be some bad tenants. But to put

the whole of the private sector into a straitjacket in an attempt to eliminate problems is a ridiculous state of affairs. We cannot legislate in that way, because it simply will not work.

We must trust people to deal fairly with each other. Why cannot we do so? If we are saying that that is impossible, what a tragic state our country and our people must be in. I do not believe that to be true. I have more faith in my fellow countrymen than that, whether they are landlords or tenants.

Perhaps what is needed is for this House of Commons to set an example, to say that we can trust people to deal reasonably with each other and to encourage them to do so within the broadest possible framework. Unless we can do this I am sure that too many landlords will leave their houses empty and that too many of the homeless will remain homeless. This House owes it to the homeless to keep its eye on the ball.

9.5 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is not difficult to imagine the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) making a similar speech during the passage of the Rent Act 1957. He would have used the same words about confidence in people and having fewer regulations.

The Minister's remarks tonight have been interesting. He told us that no major legislation is intended in this Parliament. I am not sure what he means by "major", but we shall pursue the point on other occasions to see what is intended for the rented sector. If deregulation comes about in this Parliament or in the next, it may be limited to some types of rented accommodation, but that would be only a first step towards further action to free the rented sector from regulations, which the hon. Members for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and for Suffolk, Central would wish to see.

Last week's issue of *The Economist* referred to the escalation of deregulation and made the point that in time almost everything in the privately rented sector would be decontrolled. I am sure that that is the position. It is also interesting to note that the Minister spoke about the possibility of new tenancies being subject to such decontrol. That was part of the Rent Act 1957 and the reason why unscrupulous people, whose names are well known to us, did everything that they could through harassment and worse to get rid of existing tenants. Once the controlled tenant was out, the place could be sold or let on a decontrolled basis. It is hardly likely that the statement that only new tenancies will be subject to control will possibly satisfy us.

It is a fallacy that rent control and security of tenure have been main factors in the decline of rented accomodation. I have never denied that they were factors, but they are not the most important. Slum clearance, arising not directly from the Rent Act 1957 but over a long period, has been an important factor. Other factors have been the public sector replacement of slums and the very large increase in owner-occupation with tax relief on mortgage interest. Those are the historical reasons for the sharp decline of the privately rented sector.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) mentioned the evidence given in 1981-82 to the Environment Select Committee. The British Property Federation and other witnesses made it clear to the Committee that landlords would require a proper return on such rented accommodation if the dwellings were to be provided. I would urge hon. Members to read the report and the detailed oral and written evidence given to the Select Committee. It showed clearly that the return expected by property companies and landlords would make it almost impossible for many people to afford accommodation in the rented sector.

Paragraph 55 of the report mentions a 9 per cent. return on such dwellings, which was the figure given to us by the British Property Federation, and states:

> "On this basis, even if the proportion that tenants were expected to pay was increased considerably, rents giving a 9 per cent. rate of return would require a very large increase in public expenditure on rent allowances and supplementary benefit."

It would indeed need an extremely large amount of public expenditure. It is interesting to note that Conservative Members, who usually criticise such spending, believe it right and proper to spend public money on subsidising property companies in that way.

What worries many of us is the way in which private tenants continue to suffer harassment. In London and other large cities, companies and landlords try constantly to evade the Rent Act regulations.

I wish to draw attention to the scandalous way in which the Berger property empire continues to operate. It is estimated that it has about 100,000 flats and houses in the United Kingdom, and the empire consists of a tangled web of almost 300 companies. I wrote to the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), following some exchanges at Question Time. I supplied him with plenty of documentary evidence about the Berger property empire, and his reply was along predictable lines: that no ministerial action could be taken. The tenants of that company have long complained of the serious neglect of their properties. Maximum profits are being made by the Berger group while the minimum is spent on repairs, renovation and services. The company uses many methods to pressurise tenants into leaving through neglect of the property.

It is disgraceful that the Berger property company should be allowed to operate in that way without action being taken by the Government. I am pleased that the tenants have formed an organisation to try to force the company to make repairs. I hope—I am not optimistic—that the Government will assist those tenants.

The majority of people will undoubtedly resolve their housing problems through owner-occupation. The Labour party's position on that has been made clear repeatedly. From what some Conservative Members say, one would imagine that the Labour party was against owner-occupation. Far from it. I have illustrated in previous speeches the actions taken by Labour Governments to encourage people to become owner-occupiers and the assistance that has been given to many people who would otherwise be unable to own their homes.

However, it is important to remember that a substantial minority of people—I believe that there will always be such a substantial minority—are not in a position to buy. In the greater London area, many people—even those earning average incomes—have no chance of starting on the ladder of owner-occupation. That is why we must have a rented sector. The private rented sector cannot supply the accommodation that is needed. I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that people should not profit from other people's housing needs. That is an important Socialist concept, for which there is no reason to apologise.

[Mr. David Winnick]

Therefore, for those who cannot become owner-occupiers, rented accommodation should be supplied through the public sector, genuine housing associations and housing co-operatives. That is the way in which adequate accommodation could be provided. The opposite is now the case because only a small number of council dwellings are being built, and authorities like mine have not been able to start any house building since 1979. It is wrong that so many people should be denied decent accommodation simply because Government dogma is curtailing building in the public sector.

The Government's housing policy has caused much misery and hardship. As we have seen tonight, they are being subjected to a tremendous amount of pressure to deregulate privately rented housing and the Opposition have a duty to warn the electorate that, in the unlikely event of the Conservatives winning the next election, the type of operation carried out under the Rent Act 1957 will be repeated. A Tory victory at the next election could well mean that a large number of private tenants who at present enjoy security of tenure will have that protection taken away. That is a warning for the electorate of what will happen if the Tories win the next election.

9.16 pm

Mr. John Wheeler (Westminster, North): The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) is clear in his warning to the public, but this House has another duty and it is to tell the truth about the policies and issues that concern the electorate. The hon. Gentleman suggests that there will be wholesale decontrol of privately rented houses. In his excellent speech, my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, made it clear that he does not have that in mind, nor is it in the mind of any other member of the Government. It is certainly not what Members on the Government Benches would be prepared to support.

Many of us have constituents who reside in the declining privately rented sector, and we know that those constituents, especially the elderly, must enjoy the full protection of the law. In many respects we want to see that law strengthened. This debate is not about taking away rights that tenants presently enjoy; it is about how vast numbers of empty houses in the inner cities might be brought into use.

The debate began with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) trailing, as it were, the coming by-election in Fulham and he appeared to concentrate on that. But at least there was some consensus in his speech and I welcome that. His commitment to shared tenancy schemes, of which there are 163 in operation, was welcome. That is one way forward. I believe I understood him to support the concept of shorthold, and that too is welcome.

Mr. Rooker: I never mentioned shorthold. I have a firm commitment to homes for the future. We are not in favour of shorthold and would abolish it. I do not want the hon. Member to be under any misunderstanding. I spoke about shared ownership and assured tenancies.

Mr. Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I misunderstood him because I thought he said shorthold.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's commitment to shared ownership, because that is certainly one of the most important ways of helping young married couples and others with home ownership. It is popular in my constituency and I am glad that there is common ground on this issue. It is an important area of common ground that I am sure we would wish to strengthen and encourage.

Shorthold creates a problem. Many of my elderly constituents live in large flats which they can ill afford to maintain. Sometimes those tenants are widowed and are trying to pay rent and all the other rates and service charges that arise these days. Such constituents would welcome the opportunity to share their homes, perhaps with young mobile workers who want to come into central London, but they dare not open the door to such people. I shared the enthusiasm of the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) when he referred to that problem. Surely, in the interests of common sense, this House should discover the acceptable boundaries whereby people may rent part of their homes or the properties in which they live.

The Nugee committee produced an important report. It sat for many months and considered the complicated problems affecting the occupants, leaseholders or renting tenants in blocks of flats. It is true that the hundreds of thousands of people who still live in such blocks reside mainly in London, the south-east and the inner cities. They are often elderly and unable to change to home ownership or to find accommodation elsewhere. They are captives of the system. This House has a duty to protect them and to improve the quality of their lives.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North referred to the Berger empire. It is indeed a bad property-owning company, with a total disinterest in the management of its properties and the quality of life of their unfortunate occupants.

One recommendation of the Nugee report dealt with that point. It suggested that, in appropriate circumstances, there should be an interim procedure whereby the aggrieved could require the landlord to remedy any defect or any breaches in convenants; should this fail, the tenants would be able to apply to the courts. Indeed, the report recommended that this provision should be widened to include the county courts for the appointment of a receiver-manager.

There are suggested remedies in the report to deal with some of those very real ills, which must be dealt with. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to give some commitment on when we will implement them. I know that it is a complicated area, but we must have legislation to deal with such dreadful circumstances that inflict such misery on so many people.

The report was concerned with the management of blocks of flats; it did not look beyond that. We have heard tonight about the right to buy. The Committee went so far as to say that, if a property company proposed to dispose of its assets, the existing occupants should have the first right of refusal under a fair purchase arrangement. I very much welcomed my hon. Friend's statement that he would consider going further than that. I hope that he does——

Mr. John Patten: Does my hon. Friend appreciate that I was not in any sense criticising the committee or its distinguished chairman? They strove always to stay within the terms of reference.

Mr. Wheeler: I very much appreciate my hon. Friend's point. The committee was made up of persons

with a variety of backgrounds, both professional and political. Indeed, it included a distinguished Labour councillor from Camden. All of its 53 recommendations were approved by all its members, so there was wide consensus.

The committee was concerned only with management issues and did not consider the wider political aspects. I would welcome a collective right to buy for the majority of tenants or leaseholders in a block of flats. That would make a great deal of sense. However, it would not solve the complicated human relationship problems of management. There is immense concern in London about foreign ownership of residential tenanted property. That issue should be examined. The Government should also consider urgently what should be done about the enforcement of the existing law by environmental health officers in local authorities. In the city of Westminster a unit has been set up to provide advice to the private rented sector. It is working extremely well, but in many authorities that has not been done, with the consequence that people who require professional help and guidance to deal with bad landlord or management problems find that it is lacking.

I welcome the words of my hon. Friend the Minister of State I urge upon him early acceptance of the Nugee committee recommendations. Once enacted, they will go a long way to resolving some of the problems. I welcome, too, the prospect of extending the principle to the collective right to buy in the private sector.

9.25 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): There is a scene in the excellent film "My Beautiful Laundrette" where a tenant is summarily thrown out on the street. When asked about it, the Pakistani landlord says that he is not a professional Pakistani but a professional business man. Later in the film, he and his colleagues drink to the Prime Minister for making it all possible. Evictions are not about race, but about bad landlords of all races. Many landlords are highly impersonal private companies. They are not professional or even amateur home suppliers, but professional business men who want as large a profit as they can get. Her Majesty's Government have facilitated them. In the process, the rights of private tenants, which were inadequate in the first place, have been whittled down still further.

Private tenants are a deprived social group. They lack security. Many have to pay exorbitant rents. They face harassment and illegal eviction. They live in substandard accommodation. About 42 per cent. of private rented dwellings are in substantial disrepair. Private tenants are four times more likely than other households to live in accommodation that is unfit for human habitation. One in four private tenants do not have exclusive use of a bath or toilet. How many Conservative Members would like to queue up for the use of a bath or toilet?

Private tenants are also potential victims of speculators who make huge profits by buying tenanted property, removing the tenant by any means and selling with vacant possession. Private tenants do not get their fair share of public subsidy. In 1983-84, owner-occupiers received £7 billion. There was no such subsidy to private tenants, despite the fact that 70 per cent. of them had below-average earnings. Homelessness has worsened under the Tory Government. As I mentioned in a speech just before Christmas, in my borough 150 people are homeless. That puts an immense burden on the local authority and affects the other people on the council's waiting list.

The answer was set out as a charter of rights for private tenants drawn up by various organisations, including the Law Centres Federation, the Organisation of Private Tenants, the Campaign for Single Homeless People, Shelter—the National Campaign for the Homeless—and SHAC, the London Housing Aid Centre, which has as its chairman Nick Raynsford, the excellent candidate for Labour in the Fulham by-election. I shall be one of the first to welcome him to the House after that by-election. Those organisations have drawn up an excellent charter for private tenants which the Government should implement. Its emphasis is on local authorities helping private tenants. I shall refer to some of its principles.

Councils should provide new services and change existing ones to promote the interests of private tenants. Tenants should be able to force local authorities to use their powers. Councils should consult private tenants individually and on overall policy. Different council departments should work together in the interests of tenants. Councils must seek out the worst private rented property and deal with it systematically.

In addition to those general principles, the charter goes into detail about houses in multiple occupation, the council's role in regular consultation with tenants, tackling unfit premises on a worst first basis, and identifying landlords who consistently evade the Rent Acts. Exorbitant rents should be referred to the rent officer so that he can set fair rents. Local authorities should also provide a comprehensive housing aid service, including investigators where there is harassment, and provide legal support for tenants. The rights of private tenants should be publicised, including housing benefit rights, in a number of languages so as to reach the many ethnic minority tenants.

The charter also deals with rents and subsidies, security, the need to strengthen the laws against harassment and illegal eviction and the need for a proper right to repairs to a minimum standard. It is an excellent charter, but there is also a role for central Government. The Government should be working in partnership with the local authorities and making available the means for local authorities to implement the charter, rather than rate capping them and cutting their housing investment programme. All this needs a far more sympathetic Government policy, but the Government are not sympathetic to private tenants because there is no profit in it.

9.31 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): I have been rather depressed by what I have heard today. [HON. MEMBERS: "Quite right."] It shows that the Opposition have not learnt what is the key to the provision of private sector housing. In other countries thriving private sectors fulfil the need. I accept what has been said about the evils of wicked landlords and Rachmanism in this country, but it is all due to one thing—the stupid controls which have created artificial markets, without which Rachmanism could never have existed in the first place.

I am a partner in a firm of chartered surveyors which has managed private rented property for nearly 50 years. By and large, private landlords are not the greedy people that the Opposition describe. Most of those for whom my

[Mr. John Butterfill]

firm manages property are elderly. Most have only one property, some have two. The best landlords for whom we act are family trusts, which have more properties. The family trusts do not sell off their properties. They re-let them. Family trusts are still good private landlords.

The problem is that no one is encouraged to reinvest while the present system of control remains. We could overcome that problem if we had the political will to get rid of rent control. I accept that that would mean much greater subsidies from the Treasury. That political constraint has held all parties back, but it cannot be moral to expect private landlords to subsidise occupation which should be subsidised either by local authorities or by the state. If people cannot afford to pay the market rent, we should not expect private people to subsidise them.

I cannot see why private landlords should be described as evil people. It is said that they make profits from other people's housing needs. I would sooner say that they invest to help others gain housing. There are many other forms of investment. Many landlords for which my firm acts could easily have sold their property and invested the money in building societies and got better returns. They have chosen not to do that, for purely philanthropic motives. Such people still exist.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) talked about repairs and said that tenants should have the opportunity to be rehoused if repairs were being carried out. Where does the money for that come from when a landlord does not get sufficient rent even to repair the property? Who will subsidise that activity?

Mr. Rooker: The local authority.

Mr. Butterfill: I am pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman say that.

Mr. Rooker: The local authority should be given a grant.

Mr. Butterfill: It is a problem. Who should be subsidised? In deference to my hon. Friend the Minister, I shall sit down. I have said only part of what I had hoped to say. I hope that the Government will reconsider the circumstances of private landlords.

9.36 pm

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): A theme of the debate has been the status of leaseholders of residential flats. Let me make it absolutely clear, as I think that I have done on almost every piece of housing legislation and in every debate that I have been afforded the opportunity to do so, the time is grossly overdue when we should legislate for leaseholders of residential accommodation along the lines of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967 — which the Government of the day described as Rachmanism in reverse — to give leaseholders the right collectively to buy their freeholds and collectively to manage their property, and to introduce the other recommendations of the Nugee committee report. I shall say no more about that except to underline again our overwhelming support for such a measure.

Today's debate has been about the least supported and most neglected families and householders in the country — the tenants in privately rented accommodation. One in six privately rented homes is unfit for human habitation and half are in a substantial state of disrepair. At the worst, private tenants are subject to cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and other Front Bench colleagues saw only this Monday in Fulham.

The treatment can be degrading, but it is at its worst in bed and breakfast accommodation. Being an occupant of such property means disease, malnutrition and sometimes even death because of the dangerous conditions that people are expected to endure.

Tory party policy to the rented sector has several trends, which have been seen recently. One is not to increase but to reduce income support for people with no access to owner-occupation. That is demonstrated by cuts in the board and lodging allowance, which caused so much concern among politicians and in the courts. It is also demonstrated by the prospective cuts in housing benefit, which have been forced on the DHSS by the Treasury.

Another trend is a reduction in capital expenditure on repair and improvement grants for the private sector. Local authorities, especially those in the most depressed areas with the greatest amount of privately rented accommodation, now have so little housing investment programme allocation that they are barely able to keep up with their contractual commitments, so the money that is essential to improve and repair privately rented accommodation is no longer available.

The cuts in capital expenditure have a second effect. They deny private tenants that which they would regard as paradise — the opportunity to be transferred from privately rented accommodation to a secure, safe and well-heated home owned by the local authority or a housing association. That particularly applies to the elderly, the poor and the vulnerable—of whom a large number are occupants of privately rented accommodation.

The situation is so bad in London, Manchester and some other places that the only route from privately rented accommodation into public accommodation is that of homelessness. This debate has been far too polite. We should remind ourselves that last year, 100,000 families were accepted — many more applied — as being homeless. That is the equivalent of every family in the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham having their roof taken away and being evicted. That is the scale of homelessness in the United Kingdom today.

The fourth theme that the Tories adopt towards privately rented accommodation is that if a choice has to be made—and it is electorally safe—between landlord and tenant, property and people or community and corporation, they would choose the corporation, the property and the landlord. That is seen in the speech made by the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to the Young Conservatives conference.

The last words of our motion underline the fact that in the next Parliament the Government are contemplating an end to what the Minister calls Socialist rent control, with rents being artificially low. Many private tenants in my constituency do not regard their controlled rents as being artificially low.

Certain consequences will flow from decontrol and any repeal of the Rent Act 1977. The first will be that rents will rocket. Apart from the evidence of one's own experience, one need only look at the report of the Select Committee on the Environment in 1981, which talked of the very high rents faced by households that were trying to gain access to the private rented sector in areas of considerable housing stress. It stated:

"Rents quoted for lettings outside the Rent Act ranged from two to four times the registered rent."

It also gave an example of the sort of accommodation that might be occupied by the single person to whom the Minister referred. We all know that a studio flat is practically a cubbyhole. For such a flat in Paddington, the registered rent was £30 a week, whereas the rent on the open market would have been about £90 a week. If translated to 1985-86 prices, such a rent would rise to between £100 and £120 a week.

If the Minister thinks that decontrol will help the homeless, I cite the example of Mrs. Ashby of Fulham, who is temporarily occupying a flat that will go on to the market for about £55,000. A 9 per cent. return on £55,000 is £4,950 a year—almost £100 a week. That is the kind of accommodation that the Minister says will become available to the homeless if there is decontrol in the next parliamentary term. It is absolute rubbish to think that decontrol will solve the problem of homelessness and housing shortage in London and other areas.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: I am very short of time and cannot give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Secondly, the Minister also talked of landlords and tenants agreeing rents freely, as if there would be some kind of freedom to negotiate if there were decontrol. The only freedom that decontrol will create will be the freedom to exploit—the kind of freedom that exists between a warder and his prisoner, and the freedom of the oxen to wear a yoke.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: Thirdly, the Minister says that more accommodation will become available. That is absolute rubbish, as is shown by the experience following the Rent Act 1957. I took the trouble to read through the Milner Holland report to find out how much of the extra accommodation that was forecast by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) would be available. The report examined a period of 40 months from 1960-63 — a period of decontrol and absence of security of tenure. In that time, it was estimated that the loss of lettings was 14 per cent. in London. There is no evidence that decontrol brings properties on the market to rent—quite the reverse, it makes them available only for sale.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: I am sorry, but I have only a short time.

The fourth proposition is that even if property becomes available for letting as a result of decontrol, one simple thing happens — as prices go up, the amount of accommodation available for a person to occupy goes down. The price rises and the square footage decreases. It leads to what it led to between 1957-64—to grossly overcrowded as well as overpriced accommodation, multiple occupation, insecurity and difficulty.

When I gave evidence to Lord Scarman's inquiry, I wondered why some of my constituents behave in their 20s as they do, and I am sure that one of the reasons was the rotten, overcrowded nomadic existence through which they had to go during decontrol, particularly if they were using unfurnished tenancies. At the end of the day, the local authority has to pick up the tab for such behaviour.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Fraser: This is a short debate.

I shall end my speech with three pictures of the housing situation today and of what the Prime Minister cares to call "popular capitalism". The first is a retrospective picture from the Milner Holland report, written after seven years of decontrol. It says:

"the prime cause of most of the hardship, misery and anxiety which we have described is the absence of any adequate security of tenure in the situation which prevails in London of a grave shortage of accommodation for rent at the lower end of the rental scale."

Exactly the same thing will happen as a result of the decontrol provisions that are to be put forward for the next session. What was true in the Rachman years is as true today.

The second picture of housing under popular capitalism is the picture of Mrs. Ellen Griffin, a private tenant whom I saw in Fulham on Monday. I do not think this is funny, although I see the hon. Member for Northampton (Mr. Marlow) laughing. Mrs. Griffin is 80 and frail and cannot even climb up to the gas meter to put in her money. For half a century, she has lived in conditions that we would all regard as intolerable. Her home is decaying around her. She has not enjoyed hot water for decades and her shared home is hopelessly outdated. She is in a top floor flat without light in the corridor. The roof leaks and in this weather her home is like a Siberian prison. I know from my colleagues that there are thousands of Ellen Griffins in Britain, who look for sheltered, warm and secure housing, which only the community or the state can provide, and which is denied to them because of the savage cuts in public housing investment which, for all the rhetoric that we have heard from Conservative Members, will take place again next year.

My third picture of Tory values is one that I saw last night as I drove back from a meeting in Finchley. Outside Holborn underground station, two people lay on the pavement, one in a blanket, the other in a cardboard box. They were trying to benefit from some of the warm air coming through the grills from the underground station after it had been closed. They represented the ultimate state of caring Conservatism and popular capitalism. Under such a regime we are reduced to housing meaning a box in a blizzard on a pavement.

I did not ask those two people last night whether they thought that decontrol of privately rented accommodation would help them. I did not ask Mrs. Griffin if it would help her. I did not need to, because I knew the answer already. What we ask for tonight is the support of all parties in the House for the motion when the House divides in opposition to a housing policy which already divides the nation.

9.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): This has been a relatively short debate, but with one or two exceptions it has been a fairly reflective debate, with, on occasions, some glimpses of neutral territory or common ground appearing between the two sides. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) criticised the debate for being too polite. That must have been a criticism of his hon. Friends rather than of mine, because my hon. Friends are always polite.

Let me deal with an implication in the hon. Gentleman's speech that there has been a cut in improvement grants to landlords. I listened to what he said

[Sir George Young]

about Mrs. Ashby and Mrs. Griffin. There was an implication that councils were giving less help to private landlords and tenants, but I must give him the figures. In 1979, 10,000 grants were given by local authorities to private landlords. In 1984, the latest year for which we have figures, there were 33,000 grants. The number of grants paid to private tenants has also trebled. Since 1981 local authorities have paid over 100,000 home improvement grants to landlords. Almost half of those were for conversion and improvement, and a quarter for essential repairs. Whichever way one looks at it, that is a sizeable commitment of public expenditure and it is a substantial increase over what was paid by the previous Labour Government. We intend to maintain that commitment and ensure that help is available to those who need it.

If I do not have time to deal with all the points that have been made it is because the time available is inevitably restricted.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) made a balanced speech and rejected the municipal solution. I think that he rejected the logical conclusion that comes from his premise, that there would have to be some movements in rents if one removes some of the controls, but I noted and welcomed what he said about the assured tenancy scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) spoke about the Nugee report, and I pay tribute to the work that he did in the Department to improve the rights to leaseholders. He raised the intriguing point that the election expenses for the Labour candidate in Fulham may well have been started. I noticed that the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred to him not as the prospective parliamentary candidate, but as the parliamentary candidate. I wonder whether the costs of the debate, including the modest salaries paid to myself and my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction should be debited——

Mr. Cohen: It was a slip of the tongue.

Sir George Young: It may have been an expensive slip of the tongue.

The right hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Freeson) spoke about extending the right of first refusal to long leaseholders, a point which was also raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler). The Nugee committee recommended that where a landlord wished to dispose of his interest, the residents should have a right of first refusal to enable them to buy the block if they so wished. We are considering that proposal. We are also considering the wider question which my hon. Friend raised of whether residents should have a collective right to purchase in other circumstances. We are doing this as part of our reflection on the Nugee committee's findings. We are well aware of the urgent need to make progress. Large numbers of leaseholders are waiting for the Government to come to some conclusion, and we shall do so as soon as we can.

I also welcome what the right hon. Member for Brent, East said about the assured tenancy scheme and the notion of extending more rights to tenants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) raised the vital question of the homeless. That factor was left out of many contributions. He put the housing debate in a slightly broader context and reminded us of the needs of those on waiting lists and others.

The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) made a somewhat doctrinaire speech. It was clear to him that the private sector had no role to play in solving housing problems.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) implied that all Conservative Members favour doing away with rent control altogether. I think that the vast majority of Conservative Members believe that people in regulated tenancies have security of tenure and regulated rents, and that it would be totally improper to interfere with that system in any way. Will my hon. Friend point out to Labour Members that, on the continent, people are building accommodation for private rent? On the continent, people take that accommodation. They can afford it and it works. Why the blazes can it not work here?

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Let me make it clear that we have no intention of removing the protection enjoyed by existing tenants.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) gave us the benefit of his experience in dealing with property. He deplored the continuing restrictions on investment.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said that being a private landlord was an unacceptable way of living.

Mr. Rooker: I did not say that.

Sir George Young: I wrote the words down the moment the hon. Gentleman said them.

Mr. Rooker: I was reading from my notes. I did not say that. I said that being another person's landlord for a crude commercial profit was an unacceptable way of earning a living. That is what I said. It is not what the Under-Secretary of State said.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman's comments will cause great offence to many landlords and landladies and to their tenants, who have a perfectly respectable and acceptable relationship with them. The hon. Member for Perry Barr said that that was an unacceptable way of living. That is one of the less thoughtful remarks that we have heard from him.

Not so long ago, any debate on this subject would have led to a call from the Opposition to municipalise private landlords. I am not sure whether any of them still maintain that that is the right solution. If they did take that action, it would cost about £10 billion.

The solutions put forward this evening by the Opposition will not work either. Some of my colleagues explained why the present regime is not working. In case their arguments fell on deaf ears, I shall quote three passages from last year's inquiry into British housing, chaired by Prince Philip, which had representatives from all political parties on it. The inquiry stated:

"At present there is an almost total dependency on public funding for rented housing. This is restrictive and inevitably vulnerable to changes in housing policy".

On rates of return, the inquiry stated:

"These fair rent rates of return are inadequate to keep existing landlords in the market if they have the option of a sale with vacant possession for owner-occupation. Nor are these returns necessarily sufficient to provide an incentive to improvement or repair, and they certainly are insufficient to encourage new investment in property to rent".

On the Rent Acts, the inquiry said:

"Looked at objectively, the protective legislation of the Rent Acts is either responsible all too often for diminution of supply, or is irrelevant as landlords exploit the various loopholes open to them. In either case, it is hard to see that current legislation is effective in protecting anyone's interests."

The Tory party did not say that. The inquiry set up by the National Federation of Housing Associations, which included many housing experts, unanimously came to that conclusion.

The first report of the Select Committee on the Environment stated:

"The Committee concludes that a healthy private rented sector would require that commercial landlords were able to obtain a return on investment commensurate to that available on similar risk investments elsewhere and that tenants were able without hardship to pay rents on suitable secure accommodation The present system appears to meet neither of these requirements."

That is the system which many Labour Members sought to defend. Why are they so wedded to a system which freezes out respectable institutional funding, which could help us tackle bad housing conditions? Many Labour councils are now collaborating with the private sector to turn around difficult estates. There can be no problem, therefore, about harnessing the resources of the private sector to meet housing needs.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone) *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to*.

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 177, Noes 258.

Division No. 80] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*

Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spence, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Ward, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Michael Neubert.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 150.

Division No. 81] **[10.19 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy

Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rooker, J. W.
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Alton and
Mr. John Cartwright.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MR. SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House asserts the need for a healthy and reviving private rented sector with an adequate supply of sound homes to rent as being in the best interests of tenants and landlords and those looking for accommodation; further asserts the need for improved statutory safeguards to ensure proper management of privately owned blocks of flats; and notes that provision for capital expenditure on housing was increased in the Public Expenditure White Paper.

Prevention of Terrorism

10.29 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 30th January, be approved.

We are debating tonight how a democratic society can legitimately respond to the use of indiscriminate and brutal violence for political ends. Terrorism is a fearful phenomenon of our age, because it seeks to turn one of democracy's greatest strengths, the openness of our society, inward against us. In replying to the threat of terrorism, we must jealously protect our traditional liberties, but we must be realistic about the threat that is posed to our free society by terrorism. Society has a right to defend itself, to protect innocent citizens and to give to the police and the Executive carefully defined exceptional powers, subject to the regular approval of Parliament.

The purpose of the order is to renew the 1984 Act for a further 12 months from 22 March. It is the best weapon that we have against the continuing menace of terrorism. I regard its renewal as a sad but necessary step. During the past year, the police have had notable successes in countering and preventing terrorism. Those have demonstrated both the continuing nature of the threat that we are facing and the effective use that can be made of the special powers that the Act provides. When I became Home Secretary I studied these matters carefully, and reached the conclusion that the only responsible policy in present circumstances was to continue the Act in force.

Briefly, in relation to terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland, the Act provides powers to proscribe terrorist organisations; to exclude terrorists from a part, or the whole, of the United Kingdom; and to detain for questioning persons suspected of involvement in terrorism. The latter power is also available in relation to international terrorism. The Act also establishes offences of supporting proscribed organisations, breaching or helping to breach exclusion orders, contributing to acts of terrorism and withholding information about terrorism.

I think that the House would agree that the Act makes substantial inroads on ordinary civil liberties. The Government accept that it should not be kept in force longer than is necessary. Each year Parliament reconsiders the need for its renewal, and an essential part of the argument must be the level of recent terrorist activity.

The 1974 Act followed closely upon the Birmingham bombings, which killed 21 innocent people. The introduction of the 1984 Act came shortly after the Harrods bomb and was followed a few months later by the attack on the Conservative party conference in Brighton. Fortunately, there have been no similar terrorist outrages in Great Britain in 1985. The core of our argument, however, is that without the vigilance of the police, using the powers that this Act confers, the story might have been very different.

In June the police made a number of arrests under the Act in Glasgow and elsewhere. As a result, eight people were charged with conspiracy to cause explosions, one of whom has also been charged in connection with the Brighton bombing. Following the arrests, the police found and disarmed a bomb planted by the IRA in the Rubens hotel in London. The House will remember my predecessor's statement, which gave details of a conspiracy to plant bombs in a number of seaside towns, timed to explode at the height of the holiday season. We owe it to the perseverence and professionalism of the police that that plan of violence did not succeed. The Prevention of Terrorism Act was used on that occasion.

On 11 November, two large bombs that had been placed outside Chelsea barracks were fortunately discovered and made safe before they could explode. A number of arrests followed and two men have been charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. The Prevention of Terrorism Act was used on that occasion.

Two weeks ago in Manchester, two men who pleaded guilty to planning a bomb attack on a retired army officer were convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment. A third was convicted of an offence of withholding information under section 11 of the Act. I know that the police, because of their power under section 12 of the Act, were able to arrest those concerned earlier than would otherwise have been possible. All those incidents, of which none fortunately produced a fatal result, took place in Great Britain. However, I do not need to remind the House of the continued scourge of terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Because part of the Act now covers international terrorism, I should warn the House of a new anxiety concerning terrorist activity here connected with the affairs of India. Since November last year several prominent members of the Sikh community have been attacked, apparently by other Sikhs of extreme views. The most recent attack resulted in the death of the victim, Mr. Tarsem Singh Toor, who was well known as a moderate. One person who had been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act has been charged with conspiracy to murder Mr. Toor and two other people. So the Prevention of Terrorism Act was used on that occasion. Last October four Sikhs arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Leicester were charged with conspiracy to murder the Indian Prime Minister during his visit here. We intend to be vigilant in dealing with this danger and vigorous in pursuing those who resort to violence in order to further a political argument about the future of Punjab.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As vice-chairman of the Indo-British Association may I say to my right hon. Friend how much it is appreciated by the Indian community, not only here but in the Punjab, that he should have stated his position on the matter so well at the annual dinner the other night and how encouraging it is tonight to hear him carry the matter forward under the Prevention of Terrorism Act?

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As he knows, we have to spend a good deal of time on the matter. My purpose in bringing it in tonight was to illustrate how wise the House was to agree to Lord Jellicoe's recommendation that the Act should in that respect be extended to cover terrorism other than in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): The right hon. Gentleman has mentioned the number of Sikhs who have been detained and subsequently charged. Can he say something about the number of Kashmiris who have been detained? He knows of a case with which I have been concerned involving Mr. Chaudry Siddique. Kashmiris have been detained, in some cases on two occasions, on

[Mr. Jack Straw]

what they believed to be fishing expeditions by the police, and have not been charged. Will he make observations on the fact that that has led to very deep concern in the Kashmiri community as a whole about the activities of the police?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to draw my attention to his worries. There is no question of fishing expeditions in the use of the Act. In the cases he mentioned the police were acting on specific information. Having looked into them as a result of his representations I believe that the police acted correctly within the letter of the Act. I am glad to have the opportunity to make that point clear.

The case for retaining the powers of the Act rests on the judgment that it helps to limit terrorism. We accept the view of Lord Jellicoe who recommended:

"if special legislation effectively reduces terrorism . . . it should be continued as long as a substantial terrorist threat remains".

I do not see much likelihood of the Act becoming unnecessary in the near future, because of the kind of incidents I have just enumerated. The annual renewal procedure helps to remind us that the powers are exceptional and helps to prevent them from becoming an accepted feature of our criminal law. Our consideration of the case is materially helped by the report of Sir Cyril Philips on the operation of the Act in 1985. He carries out admirably his role of providing the House with a snapshot picture of the way that the Act works in practice, with particular emphasis on any indications that the powers are being abused. He submits himself to an exhausting programme of visits and discussions and is given wide access to Home Office papers on particular cases, including any where a complaint has been made about the way in which the Act operated. I am deeply grateful to him, as I am sure all hon. Members are.

The right hon. and learned Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) and some of his colleagues criticised me courteously in correspondence for, in their belief, failing to publicise the fact that Sir Cyril's review was in progress or announcing its publication. I think that they are a little unfair and I have replied to the right hon. and learned Gentleman in some detail. Since last year's renewal, it had been public knowledge that Sir Cyril would again carry out a review this year. I announced this in answer to a question on 14 January, but I accept that it would have been sensible to make the announcement a little earlier. Nevertheless, it allowed time for hon. Members to make representations to Sir Cyril if they wished. I received Sir Cyril's report on 27 January and on 30 January I announced that I had placed copies of it and of my reply in the Library and the Vote Office, so this year—as opposed to last year—there was ample time between the tabling of Sir Cyril's report and this debate.

Sir Cyril suggested that Parliament should pay special attention to the exclusion powers under sections 4 and 5 of the Act. Those sections provide power to exclude British citizens from either Great Britain or Northern Ireland if the responsible Secretary of State is satisfied that they are concerned in the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism connected with the affairs of Northern Ireland. It has sometimes been described as a power of internal exile, but that is misleading because exiles are forced to leave their homes, whereas sections 4 and 5 cannot be used to exclude a British citizen from a part of the United Kingdom in which he or she has been ordinarily resident for the last three years.

I know that the police in Great Britain and Northern Ireland continue to find that exclusion is valuable in the containment and prevention of terrorism. Terrorism thrives on movement. The mobility of the terrorist increases the circle of those who can be drawn into terrorist activity and it deepens public anxiety.

Sir Cyril Philips points out, accurately, that the exclusion power considerably infringes normal civil liberties. That is why Lord Jellicoe recommended that the possibility of abolishing this power should be kept under regular review and that it should be one of the first to be repealed. I accept that entirely, but our assessment of the security situation persuades us that it would not yet be safe to abandon this power. I will give the figures so that the House can judge for itself. At present, 240 exclusion orders are in force, most of them excluding people from Great Britain. A great many of those orders were made under the previous Acts and were therefore indefinite. In 1979, we began the practice of reviewing all exclusion orders of more than three years' standing.

Since the passage of the 1984 Act, which established a three-year time limit for new exclusion orders, the review of old orders has been accelerated, but in a significant number of cases exclusion has had to be maintained to protect the public. Last year, 58 orders were reviewed and exclusion was maintained in 25—just under half—of those cases. As we continue the review, it is probable that we shall identify a hard core of committed and active terrorists whom it would be dangerous to readmit to the territories from which they are excluded. I am therefore driven to think that the power of exclusion should be retained for the present. Sir Cyril suggests that the review process should continue and that the power to maintain the exclusion in some cases might be preserved. I think that that is right and I hope that the House will agree.

Sir Cyril makes another suggestion which I am not able at the moment to accept—that the Government should undertake not to make any new orders against persons who have not previously been excluded. He argues that the declining use of the exclusion power indicates that it is no longer necessary to make new orders. Having looked into the matter, I do not feel that that is yet the case. Last year, seven new exclusion orders were made, six of which are still in force, and that was four more than in the previous year. We are able to use the powers more sparingly than in the past, but I do not think that that undermines the justification for the few new orders that are now made. The power is reserved for the most serious cases and I am sure that the possibility of exclusion also has some deterrent effect which restricts the movement of a great many active terrorists. I think that Sir Cyril's proposal will be helpful if and when there are definite signs of a decline in the terrorist threat, but that moment is not yet with us.

I have no desire to heap powers on the police for the sake of doing so. The standing of the police in the community is so important that they should not have powers which they do not need and which only attract criticism to them. The protection of the public is the test, and in this case it is the protection of the public against terrorism. I hope that the House agrees that we have to be cautious about demolishing powers when the threat of terrorism is so active and, in some respects, increasing. It

would not be right to buy a nod of approval from the Opposition or a word of praise from *The Guardian* if the price is that terrorists can go about their work with a greater sense of ease and security.

It is essential that the Prevention of Terrorism Act be renewed again this year. This is familiar ground. It was first introduced by the Labour Administration in 1974. It is a weakness that our common approach to this problem has not been maintained. I believe that to argue that the legislation is no longer necessary is to ignore the plain facts, some of which I have set before the House.

Having some acquaintance with him, I think that, if the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) were in my position, he would need these powers and come to the House and ask for them. He would defy those pressures which oppose the powers, because he would then have a responsibility which forced him to seek them and very occasionally, and reluctantly, to use them. If that is so—I am sure in my own mind that it is—it would be better if the right hon. Gentleman could come to that point now as the spokesman of the main opposition party.

It is in that sentiment that I ask the House to support the renewal of the Act. I call on Opposition Members to think very carefully before they oppose the motion bearing in mind the terrorist threat that I have described. I hope that the House will act what I would regard as a responsible part when the House deals with this matter of vital national interest.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Several minutes ago the House was subjected to an outbreak of the most appalling behaviour. The reason for that behaviour was to gain publicity. Is there any way in which the House can prevent the cause from being given publicity?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): There is nothing that I can do about it.

10.47 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The whole House is united in its resolute and implacable hostility to terrorism. The question is not whether we should fight terrorism but how. What special powers, if any, are needed to fight terrorism? What civil liberties are we ready to sacrifice—what civil liberties is it right to sacrifice — to fight terrorism? The question is also whether substantial inroads into civil liberties caused by anti-terrorist legislation are themselves a victory for terrorism.

A prime aim of terrorist groups is to secure the contraction of civil liberties in the societies which they attack and to bring the authorities, especially the police and security forces, into conflict with the community. By doing so, terrorists hope to secure a larger number of passive sympathisers—more people to shelter them or to deny information to the police. They may even hope to recruit more active members. Above all, they hope to exploit a climate of abnormality and emergency in which to weaken general public confidence in the administration of the state.

When Parliament gives up part of our normal civil liberties, it risks giving terrorism a victory. From the day when the first version of this Act was introduced into Parliament, on behalf of the then Labour Government, by the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins), it has been acknowledged by successive Home Secretaries that the legislation erodes civil liberties.

Home Secretaries in this Government have acknowledged—and each of the phrases I now use is a quotation from statements by Conservative Home Secretaries since 1981—that the powers these Acts contain

"infringe our shared concept of civil liberties . . . make a considerable inroad into the civil liberties of which we are justly proud . . . make sad inroads into our cherished traditions of civil liberties . . . are intensely undesirable".

When the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) moved the Second Reading of the current Act, he said that its powers were

"exceptional, not to be taken for granted, and to be exercised only with the greatest care and consideration".

He acknowledged that

"In other circumstances"—

he—

"would regard them as wholly unacceptable". — [*Official Report*, 24 October 1983; Vol. 47, c. 52.]

Tonight the present Home Secretary agreed that this Act makes substantial inroads into ordinary civil liberties.

That is why this Act is limited to a five-year life and must be renewed annually. This is why each year it is not the Opposition who have to make the case for annulment but the Government who have to make a conclusive case for renewal. The Home Secretary failed to make that case tonight, and the facts that he failed to provide for the House demonstrate clearly why that case cannot properly be made.

In terms of preventing terrorism, this Act is a failure. Terrorism continues horrifically. The presence of the Prevention of Terrorism Act on the statute book, most unhappily, prevented neither the atrocity at Harrods nor the abomination at Brighton. Indeed, the very statistics published by the Government themselves demonstrate how little effectiveness this legislation delivers in return for the inroads it undoubtedly makes into civil liberties.

The Government statistics published only last month demonstrate that starting from the introduction of the legislation in 1974 to the end of last year—less than six weeks ago—92 per cent. of those detained in Britain have not been subject to any charge. In other words, they are innocent in law. Moreover, only 3 per cent. have been charged with offences under the legislation, and one third of those have been charged only with failure to co-operate with examination at the port—a charge that could be made only because those subject to it were detained in the first place.

Of those charged with offences under these Acts, only 2 per cent. of those detained were found guilty of any offence whatsoever, and only a half of 1 per cent. were found guilty of offences meriting more than one year's imprisonment. Of those charged with criminal offences under other Acts, only 4 per cent. of those detained were found guilty of such offences, and fewer than 2 per cent. received prison sentences of one year or more. All told, fewer than 2·5 per cent. of those detained were found to have committed offences of any substantial seriousness. Therefore, the Act, both as creator and apprehender of serious offences, is an almost complete failure.

Mr. Hurd: I gave the House particulars of various terrorist attempts in this country during 1985 that were frustrated, so that no one was killed, and I said that in each

[Mr. Hurd]

of those cases the Act was used. Does not the right hon. Gentleman think that that amounts to a strong case for renewal?

Mr. Kaufman: The right hon. Gentleman says that the Act was used. He does not say whether those attempts would have been stopped had the Act never existed and had other powers, already available, been used instead. The Act has been used, and is being used. The question is whether it is needed to apprehend and deal with those who seek to commit terrorist acts.

Lacking information that the right hon. Gentleman may or may not have available to him, he has not presented a convincing case for anything except that an Act on the statute book has been used. I have demonstrated conclusively from his own figures that almost all the use of the Act for detection is detention of innocent persons who have not been charged with any offence.

The Act as an apprehender of perpetrators of offences that existed before the Act was passed is only a little more successful. It is impossible for the Government to demonstrate that the 71 people convicted of serious crimes after being detained under this Act since 1974—71 out of the more than 6,000 who have been detained—would not have been caught if the legislation had never been passed.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): In the cases that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary mentioned of murderous acts having been frustrated by the use of the Act, what alternative powers would the right hon. Gentleman have used if he had been Home Secretary to frustrate such terrorist deeds in the absence of this Act?

Mr. Kaufman: I shall be coming to that point, and I request the hon. Gentleman to continue listening to what I have to say.

It is certain that 95 per cent. of those detained under this legislation have been completely innocent of anything, however trivial. That failure rate—or success rate, if one cares to put it that way—is scarcely a vindication of powers that Ministers in the present Government have described as "intensely undesirable" and "wholly unacceptable". Perhaps that is why, lacking any really convincing justification for the legislation, Ministers have been driven to make strange claims for retaining these powers.

When the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks moved the Second Reading of the Act two years and four months ago, he called in aid, as an example of terrorism, the shooting of a former Israeli ambassador in London—an assassination attempt for which, he claimed, those responsible are now serving long sentences. However, those terrorists and would-be murderers were apprehended without any recourse to the powers under this Act, and were sentenced for offences not contained in them.

A year ago, when he moved the renewal of these powers, the Minister of state cited as an example of the necessity for continuing these powers the murder of WPC Yvonne Fletcher. That was indeed a dreadful killing of a courageous young woman, and I have twice had the sad opportunity of meeting her bereaved parents and extending my sympathy to them. However, the legislation has done nothing to apprehend or to punish those who murdered WPC Fletcher. Despite the continuing presence of the Act on the statute book, her killers went, and remain, free. Indeed, one Libyan present in the People's Bureau at the time of the murder is now living placidly in Wiltshire, courtesy of the Home Secretary.

Although terrorism unhappily continues, despite the continuance of this Act, the legislation is not only mostly activated in vain, but is too often activated in a highly questionable manner. In March of last year, 10 so-called hunt saboteurs were detained at Daventry police station and told that they were being held under the Act. That the Act was being used to hold them was confirmed to the National Council for Civil Liberties by the superintendent of the station. Three of those detained were charged with public order and theft offences, but those charges were subsequently dropped. Whatever were the police doing holding such people under the Act?

Five months ago, Mr Shapua Kaukungua, chief representative of SWAPO for the United Kingdom and western Europe, was held for examination at Heathrow airport under the Act. The Foreign Office has acknowledged SWAPO as an important and legitimate organisation yet when my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) wrote to the Home Secretary drawing attention to the treatment of Mr. Kaukungua, the right hon. Gentleman replied on 30 January stating that this incident

"does not in any way reflect on the Government's attitude towards the status of SWAPO",

and saying that what he called this "tiresome procedure" had to be suffered by hundreds of travellers each year.

But the Home Secretary's response was both inaccurate and disingenuous, because the Home Secretary's own statistics show that last year not hundreds of travellers but only 22 persons were examined for more than one hour under that part of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act relating to international terrorism. Mr. Kaukungua, the acknowledged representative of an acknowledged organisation in good standing with the Government, was one of those 22. The simple question that we have to ask is, why?

Last year, during the debate on the renewal of the Act the Minister of State, in a state of high indignation, declared:

"It is quite outrageous to talk about random arrests."

under this Act. He insisted that

"there is no question of random arrests."

Yet on 5 May last year councillor Sheena Clarke, the deputy chairman of Sheffield city council housing committee, returning after a housing conference in Belfast, was detained at Manchester airport under the Act, as the week before had another person from Sheffield who attended that conference. A spokesman for Greater Manchester police said later that the two detentions were routine,

"like going through customs, a random one or two might be stopped."

That goes clear against the Minister's undertaking and is a deplorable misuse of an Act that the Minister himself last year in the same debate said represented

"a very considerable infringement of the civil liberties normally enjoyed by individuals in this country."—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 1299-1304.]

How can the Home Secretary claim, as he did tonight, that there is no question of fishing expeditions under the Act when Greater Manchester police say that they stop people "like going through customs, a random one or two"

under the Prevention of Terrorism Act?

The fact is that in so far as the detention powers under the Act were ever needed, their continuation in England and Wales at any rate cannot be justified now even on the Government's own terms with the implementation of the powers under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, under which those suspected of a serious criminal offence can be detained without charge for up to 96 hours.

If one takes the figures for Great Britain for last year, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act would have allowed the detention for the full period during which they were held of all but 10 of the 193 people detained in Great Britain under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and not charged. To justify the seven-day power in any way, the Home Secretary should tell us how many of those detained for more than 96 hours were charged and how many were convicted on evidence obtained after 96 hours in detention. That information is simply not available, but it is very important.

Apart from the detention power, the most controversial power under the Act is the power of exclusion; and this year we have Sir Cyril Philips' report on the exclusion powers. Last February in the debate on the renewal of the Act the Minister of State was full of praise for Sir Cyril. In the 1985 debate he expressed gratitude to Sir Cyril and thanked him for producing an independent report which was, he said, "both clear and helpful". That, of course, was because 12 months ago Sir Cyril was, as the Minister put it,

"broadly satisfied that the Act is being used properly".

This year the reaction to Sir Cyril's review has been rather different and it has to be said that that is because this year Sir Cyril clearly, from the Government's point of view, was not helpful. In his report he recalled that Lord Jellicoe in his review of 1983 stated:

"the power to exclude should remain available to the Secretary of State in extreme cases . . . and the possibility of abolishing it should be kept under regular review, without prejudice to the Act's other powers."

He added:

"it should be one of the first powers in the Act to be repealed".

The report by Sir Cyril Philips continued:

"In the debates leading to the Act of 1984 Parliament accepted that the power to exclude was in many ways the most extreme of the powers in this Act, the most severe in its effect on civil liberties, the most divergent from the normal criminal process, and that it had aroused substantial resentment even among many, particularly in Northern Ireland, who may well support the aims and content of the remainder of the legislation.

There is no question that this power is objectionable in principle as being inconsistent with the right of the citizen to reside in and travel freely throughout the territory of the state of which he is a citizen and as operating to deprive a person of an important civil right without a judicial hearing."

Sir Cyril recommended:

"For these reasons the time would appear to be right for Parliament to take this opportunity of considering afresh the need for sections 4 and 5. I understand the legal position to be that if these sections are not renewed, existing exclusion orders made under them will cease to have effect. A first prudent step might well take the form of an undertaking not to make any exclusion orders under sections 4 and 5 against persons who have not hitherto been subject to such an order".

The Home Secretary in his letter of reply to Sir Cyril admitted that exclusion orders

"very considerably infringe ordinary civil liberties",

but he curtly rejected Sir Cyril's recommendation, as he has done again tonight. But that recommendation was all the more powerful because it reminded the Home Secretary—something to which he has not referred—that he now has powers to discontinue only part of this Act. Lord Elton, speaking for the Government in the other place when this legislation was being passed, promised that it was by no means a foregone conclusion that every section would be renewed.

The Home Secretary justified his decision by drawing attention to continuing terrorist activity. He has done that again tonight. But, on that basis, this legislation, passed in urgency to deal with a special situation and retained on the statute book with repugnance, will never be repealed, for it is hard to speculate when terrorism will be defeated. It is certain that terrorism continues despite the continuance of this legislation on the statute book. We are faced with the paradox that this Act's signal lack of success is cited as the reason why it should be continued.

Terrorism is a horror and a plague, and we should unite in using all legitimate weapons to combat and defeat it. The Opposition have no reason to criticise the illiberality of this Act when the condemnations by Ministers of its invasions of civil liberties bestrew the pages of *Hansard*. This Act is obnoxious and unsuccessful. We have not been offered any convincing evidence to justify its continuing presence on the statute book. That is why we shall vote against it.

11.8 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): I am sorry that the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) and the Labour party will once again divide the House on this matter. They must know what will happen if they throw out the whole of the Act; for example, section 6, which provides the power to exclude non-citizens of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including the very people about whom the right hon. Gentleman is so concerned. Those people might, for instance, be from Libya. That power is contained in the Act. I put it to the right hon. Gentleman that he would be throwing away a power which he has been urging my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to use.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I shall give way later. Many other hon. Members wish to speak.

I want to make four main points. First, it is essential to have the Act. If anyone doubts that, he only needs to read the Jellicoe report or discuss the operation of the Act with those who are in the front line—the police—and who have to operate it. The Act is designed ultimately to protect the innocent, and it does have that effect. I would say without hesitation that there are innocent men and women who are alive today who would be dead if the police had not been able to exercise their powers under the Act.

On the matter of the exclusion orders, I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, or the Minister who is to reply to the debate, to confirm that he personally reviews these cases as they come up. It is important for the House to know that such a review is carried out by a Minister in each case.

Laws, however, are not enough. We can pass the continuance order, as I hope we shall, but the police need something more. They need to be properly equipped and trained to meet the threat, and they are entitled to the support of both sides of the House when they do this. It

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

is in that specific connection that I want to comment on the appearance of police officers at Heathrow carrying sub-machine guns in order to carry out their anti-terrorist duties. I confess to being troubled by this. It is a new phenomenon in Britain. I have spoken to my right hon. Friend about it, and to senior members of the metropolitan police force and, just on balance, I have been persuaded that, regrettably, it is necessary.

There are, however, two matters that trouble the Police Federation and I think that I should put them on record. I can do no better than quote the chairman of the Police Federation and some remarks from the *Police* magazine. Mr. Curtis, the chairman, said:

> "It is totally absurd to make a high profile public announcement that a police unit, permanently armed, will perform anti-terrorist duties at Heathrow and, in the same announcement, to attempt to reassure the public by pointing out that the automatic weapons carried by these police officers may only be fired by them using the single shot operation, and that they must be fired from the shoulder."

He continued:

> "To put the entire responsibility for outshooting terrorists on the police, and at the same time to withdraw the special army units at Heathrow, looks to me like a weakening, not a strengthening of airport security."

I have to say to my right hon. Friend that I do not agree entirely with Mr. Curtis in all his criticism. But it would be useful if the Minister would address that matter when he replies to the debate.

The equipment that has been issued for this duty is the so called Heckler and Koch MP5 gun. I am advised that the weapon is a bad choice for such duty. I shall quote from the *Police* magazine, from an article written by a person who I believe is a firearms expert. He gets it right when he says:

> "As a fully automatic weapon of 9 mm calibre the Heckler and Koch MP5 was a bad choice . . . It is over penetrative, prone to ricochet and lacks stopping power."

I ask my hon. Friend, if not tonight, on some other occasion, to address that matter, because it is of real concern within the police service.

My next point concerns the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The RUC is not in any doubt that it needs the Act and the other emergency powers that are available to it in Northern Ireland in order to protect innocent lives. Those hon. Members who have visited Ireland, as I have from time to time, will be conscious of the fact that in the face of the carnage that is committed by terrorists, the police need extraordinary powers with which to tackle it. But the RUC needs the support of the House in other ways. I am disturbed that the RUC's morale has been severely damaged by the attempts of its Chief Constable to gag its spokesman and prevent him from examining its views.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not wish to stop the hon. Gentleman from making important points, but this debate lasts for only one and a half hours and it should focus on the Act and its renewal. I ask you to rule that other issues, however important, should not be dealt with in the limited time available.

Mr. Deputy Speaker I am listening carefully. The hon. Member must relate his remarks to the order.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: I am willing to do so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would have been wiser for the hon. Gentleman to let the Chair decide these matters rather than presume to decide them himself.

I return directly to the order. The argument of the right hon. Member for Gorton was based on a fallacy. He said that because my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary could not set out in enormous detail examples of where the Act had resulted in offenders being brought to book, it was not effective. But it is the pre-emptive action by the police which is possible under the Act that frequently prevents people being killed. It is that pre-emptive aspect of the Act to which the right hon. Gentleman has not addressed himself.

There is increasingly a need for international co-operation to tackle all kinds of terrorism. I was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend say that under the powers available to him he has been able to extend his ability to exclude to deal with terrorists from the middle east, and perhaps now to deal with those few members of the Sikh community who cause terrorist problems in this country.

That is good news, but it is not sufficient. It is necessary for the international conventions on terrorism to be pursued more vigorously. I shall shortly be sending my right hon. Friend a number of suggestions about ' ow that could be done.

It is a tragedy that the Opposition are again voting against the renewal of the Act. I understand their reasons. They do them no credit. They fail to recognise that our fellow citizens live constantly under a threat and that the members of the police service, whom we ask to risk their lives to protect us, need this power and should not be denied it by the Opposition for political reasons.

11.17 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): We in the House who are revolted by terrorism in the United Kingdom and regard terrorists within our shores as the most despicable of our fellow creatures must recognise that there remains a need for some legislation to protect us from the terrorist scourge. Despite repeated and recent outrages, much has been achieved—some within the legislative framework that we are considering, and some outside it. It would be wrong to allow a debate on this subject to pass without repeating a tribute to those who bravely work, in and out of uniform, to rid us in the United Kingdom of that terrorist scourge.

The recent Anglo-Irish agreement, whatever its constitutional prospects—I do not wish to dwell on them tonight because the debate it is not about them—has shown us that co-operation between the British and Irish Governments can be developed within the context of the prevention of terrorism at least.

I welcome the recent meeting between Ministers responsible for justice and security in the two countries. I also welcome the breadth of their discussions, if the reports of them are reasonably accurate. Those discussions should be viewed as a beginning rather than as an end in themselves. I hope that in due course, and where necessary, we shall see legislation aimed at the prevention of terrorism and the detection of terrorists being enacted in like terms and at the same time here and in the Dail.

I welcome the Government's acceptance, which they signalled in 1984, of the need for far more effective monitoring of the operation of the prevention of terrorism provisions than had previously been the case, especially

bearing in mind the Government's acceptance in 1984 that it was to be regarded as a temporary and expedient Act rather than as a permanent unwelcome feature of our law. Indeed, I have been troubled—this is an observation, not a criticism — by the pessimism of the Home Secretary's prognosis earlier in the debate.

We now have the advantage of seeing and have had the time to consider carefully the second report by Sir Cyril Philips, the independent person—indeed, nobody could be more independent than he — appointed by the Secretary of State's predecessor to monitor the operation of the Act. Sir Cyril makes many deeply persuasive and cogent points which, while they do not go to the whole root of the legislation, deserve less of a brush-aside response than they have received from the Government.

As the Home Secretary has recognised and, indeed, as is provided for under statute, it is possible to review parts of the Act while still renewing the remainder. It is regrettable that the Government have not at least given the House the opportunity to review separately the continuation of exclusion orders under sections 4 and 5, that is those relating to the United Kingdom.

The Home Secretary made a realistic assessment in his reply to Sir Cyril Philips on 29 January. He said that exclusion orders, which are a form of internal restriction, if not of internal exile, in the United Kingdom

"very considerably infringe ordinary civil liberties."

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was right to remind us of Lord Jellicoe's comment that the possibility of abolishing the power to exclude should be kept under regular review, without prejudice to the Act's other powers. The Government should have offered the House that possibility tonight.

Sir Cyril Philips, in his report earlier this year, reminds us of four important changes in practice which have taken place since 1984, and it is right that the House should be reminded of them. First, he tells us that new exclusion orders have become less and less important as an effective means of preventing terrorism, and are of diminishing significance. That is his independent judgment,and we should pay proper respect to it.

Secondly, in the context of increasing emphasis on the need for general and co-ordinated action against terrorism, the strategy of transferring suspected terrorists from one part of the United Kingdom to another appears to have diminishing relevance and application. In other words, we should not be shunting terrorists from one part of the United Kingdom to another, because that achieves nothing. We should be, and have been, achieving the prevention of terrorism itself—a far more useful and important objective.

Thirdly, the police now have all the powers given to them by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which came fully into force on 1 January 1986. Those powers enable the police to detain and question suspected terrorists effectively in the context of criminal procedure and codes that apply equally to all of us. If possible, it is important that those who are suspected of terrorism should be questioned and detained within the same context as is applicable to the rest of us.

Fourthly, sections 4 and 5 are now available only against people who have not ordinarily resided in Great Britain and Northern Ireland continuously since 1982. Sir Cyril Philips believes that the high level of revocations in the current review demonstrates that the police are far better informed and equipped than used to be the case. Exclusions which formerly appeared necessary are no longer deemed to be so.

For those reasons—this is not a whim of mine—Sir Cyril Philips recommended that Parliament should take this opportunity of considering afresh the need for exclusion order provisions and that as a first step the Home Secretary should give an undertaking to make no fresh orders. That is objective advice, and nothing could have been more.

Leaving aside Sir Cyril Philips's objective judgment, regrettably there is evidence in some cases of doubtful subjective factors. Doubtful judgments by individual police officers and officials have been given the status of truth without evidence to support them. The case of Mr. Guilfoyle, of which the Home Secretary is aware, is a worrying example. He was thrown straight back at his old associates, despite his declared desire to start a new life. It is a credit to the Home Office that the order against him was eventually revoked, but it is no credit to the Home Office or the police that the revocation was necessary. The original exclusion order made upon his release from prison was based on incorrect information. Because of the nature of the procedures under the Act, Mr. Guilfoyle had no opportunity to challenge the factors upon which the order was based until after his exclusion had been effected, and only because his solicitors in the Republic of Ireland worked unusually and especially hard and succesfully on the case.

Cases such as Mr. Guilfoyle's demonstrate that there is a danger of exacerbating the perception that the availability of exclusion orders constitutes anti-Irish legislation, thus worsening the risk of more and more terrible terrorist acts. The substantive law outwith the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 is now stronger than it was in 1984. I confess readily to having been one of those who believed that the substantive law as contained in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act went too far. However, now that we have the Act, I do not hesitate to make proper use of it.

I share Sir Cyril Philips's view that the substantive law's strengthened state is sufficient not only to render exclusion as alien to our concept of justice as ever it was, but also otiose. I am surprised that the present Home Secretary does not give Sir Cyril the credit that his report deserves by putting it to the test, especially in relation to sections 4 and 5, by allowing them separate consideration.

11.29 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): As a solicitor, I have listened with some interest to the legalistic arguments from hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 should have provided us with the opportunity of considering these provisions afresh and objectively, but I must say reluctantly that I share the Home Secretary's view that it is not yet the time to abandon the provisions. I hope that the Opposition will consider the timing, not in a legalistic sense, but in a political sense. I shall restrict my remarks entirely to the effect that not approving the provisions would have in the Province of Northern Ireland.

This is not the time or the place to discuss the details, justifications, attributes or otherwise of the Anglo-Irish agreement, but it is a proper time to show how that agreement is perceived in Northern Ireland by the two polarised parts of the community. Republicans, whether

[Mr. Barry Porter]

constitutional or terrorist, see it as a toe in the door to ultimate Irish unity. Equally, the non-constitutional Unionists perceive it to be exactly the same thing.

On Easter Tuesday the marching season will begin in the Province of Ulster. If by that time there has been no arrangement between the constitutional Unionists — I regret their absence from the Chamber this evening— and the Government in relation to the agreement, the probability is that there will be violence, and not necessarily only from the provisional IRA. We must now start to consider the probability of violence in a big way from the Protestant paramilitaries. I am sure that the hon. Member who has recently been elected to represent Fermanagh would not disagree with my forecast.

If there is even a scintilla of truth in what I say, there is no reason at this stage to abandon the provisions of the Act and not to approve their continuance. Regardless of whether they are effective—there are arguments on both sides—and regardless of their effect on civil liberties, their abandonment would be seen as an abandonment by the House of its determination to defeat terrorism, whether it be republican or loyalist.

That is my fear. Let us consider the provisions during the coming year and let us see what happens, but in view of what is likely to happen in the Province, let us not abandon them now.

11.33 pm

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): I hope that the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) is as wrong about what he has just said as he was about the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

We have heard almost no politics in the debate so far. The process is so mechanical. Many of us have been here since 1974 and have heard every melancholy renewal, enactment and re-enactment. The Act will run until 1989, and if we are still here in 1989, we know that we shall hear the same things. Ireland is a political problem, not a security problem, important though security is. Children in Northern Ireland have never known anything else; they were born in trouble. The reality is that Britain has never been able to hold down Ireland without armed force. Trouble was bound to break out again as long as the border remained. It is certain that it will continue for as long as it remains.

There is no doubt that the synthetic division of Ireland forced upon an unwilling people is at the root of it all, and until we handle that politically the problems will continue. The Act deepens and exacerbates the situation. It is and will continue to be the cause of a great deal of the killing. That is why I have always voted against it. The Labour party did not always vote against it and it was a long time before the bipartisan policy began partly to work itself out. People with an Irish background and especially with an Irish accent are suspect and feel threatened as a result of the Act. If they work in the trade union and Labour movement and are involved in legitimate actions such as struggles and strikes, they are particularly suspect. If they are relatives or friends of a detainee they are suspect.

Let us look at the matter of the excludees and the orders that they have to obey. As has been said, they have to leave Great Britain or be subject to criminal charges. They are not told the evidence against them, which is appalling, and they have no opportunity to cross-examine those who are making the charges against them. They have no form of trial and no right of appeal.

During the debate on the Bill in another place Sir Cyril Philips was appointed to report to Parliament. In paragraph 20 of his report he says, and it is worth repeating:

> "There is no question that this power is objectionable in principle as being inconsistent with the right of a citizen to reside in and travel freely throughout the territory of which he is a citizen and is operating to deprive a person of an important civil right without a judicial hearing."

The Home Secretary said what a good man Sir Cyril Philips was. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said, when Sir Cyril went a little farther and was really critical and asked for the power of exclusion to be removed, the Home Secretary changed his mind about him. When Sir Cyril Philips asked for that power to be removed, he described it as having "diminishing relevance of application." He argued:

> "The time would appear right for Parliament to take this opportunity of considering afresh the need for Sections 4 and 5 (exclusion of United Kingdom citizens)"

with the intention of getting rid of them. That is just not going to happen. The Home Secretary wrote back within two days and said:

> "Exclusion powers very considerably infringe ordinary civil liberties"

But he said that he would do nothing about it.

There are many examples of injustice, and even the review procedure has inbuilt injustices. For instance, the exclusion order lapses after three years, subject to renewal. But life intervenes and the reality is that many of the people who are excluded have moved house in that time, and many of them think that three years ends the whole thing. But renewal could take place and they would not know about it. That makes them criminals and they could be subject to imprisonment. That is one of the things that the National Council for Civil Liberties brought to our attention, particularly in the last day or two. If the order had been renewed, such people are in grave difficulty. We must look at that, and I hope that in his reply the Minister will give us some guidance.

It is almost impossible to prove that this Act has done any good, but it causes the perpetration of appalling injustice and is fraught with inbuilt miscarriages of justice. Two dreadful cases come to mind immediately and were the subject of early-day motions. The first case is that of Dr. Maire O'Shea. I knew her some 30-odd years ago when she used to baby-sit in my home when we had our first boy. I was staggered when she was tried. We put down an early-day motion. This good doctor, this psychiatrist who worked in our local hospital and who was beloved in the area, was found to be innocent.

The other case involved the Maguire family. It gave me immense pleasure to read the early-day motion in the names of the hon. Members for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) and for Epping Forest (Sir J. Biggs-Davison). They realised what a terrible and brutal injustice had been done to that whole family. Lord Fitt visited the family in gaol when Guiseppe Conlan was dying. Mr. Conlan told him that he was innocent. The evidence on which that family were gaoled was appalling. That is the sort of thing that happens under the Act.

I shall vote against the order, as I have always voted against it. The Act is a draconian and unjust measure that

intensifies the problems facing us all. It is a provocation. People are angry that such an injustice is perpetrated. The Act will continue the killing, not prevent it.

I hope that my hon. Friends will vote against this terrible measure tonight.

11.40 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I speak now, as I have spoken since the introduction of the Act, in expressing a deep regret, which I am sure is felt by all in the House, that this Act is necessary. We have always appreciated that it is a denial of some of the basic human rights that this House has done so much to preserve. It is only in the most extraordinary circumstances that we have agreed to its continuance.

I was pleased that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary echoed the words of his predecessor and welcomed the fact that the Act is always subject to annual review. When it was introduced, that was not the intention. During its Standing Committee stage, a number of us pressed for an annual review, and the then Home Secretary readily agreed. It is necessary to look on the Act as a temporary measure, which should be abolished at the first opportunity. I accept, however, that that opportunity is not here today.

I do not think that there is any validity in the comment that exclusion orders are a hardship and burden on those subject to them. I suspect that those concerned are in the forefront of politics and are well aware of the order and its effects on himself and his family. However, I find exclusion orders abhorrent, and I echo the words of Sir Cyril Philips on that.

We must remember that Sir Cyril conducts an annual review. He is a worthy gentleman who carries out an independent review. I should like to think that the burden of proof is always upon the Government, not upon Sir Cyril. He is the independent person who has investigated the workings of the Act. He produced an excellent report, in which he said that exclusion orders were a power that should be removed and that their phasing out should start now. The burden is on the Government to show that there is a need for the orders. I hope that a great deal of thought is given to that part of the report with a view to implementing it during the next year.

I am mindful that much is said about the impact of the Act which, as Sir Cyril has shown in his report, is not true. Last year, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that it was a convenient way of removing political activists from the streets. He said that its powers had been used against South African nationalist groups. Sir Cyril examined that carefully; he was satisfied that the powers under the Act had not been used inappropriately and that there had been no breach of the assurances that had been given by Ministers.

Sometimes one feels that extravagant claims are made. I do not know whether the claim about the hunting fraternity of Daventry was extravagant, but I find it worrying. I hope that the right hon. Member for Gorton will refer all the facts to Sir Cyril so that they may be part of his review this year. I hope that he will be able to satisfy us. If the Act has been used in that way, it is regrettable.

I repeat that there is an independent review, and it is important that we should have it. It is necessary to continue the Act, but where the independent review finds that a power should be abolished, the burden is on us to disagree because the independent review prima facie is a failure.

11.45 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): If there is one aspect of the Act's implementation which exposes the hollow rhetoric and patent insincerity of the Government it is their inability to implement sections 10 and 11. Reference has been made to the few prosecutions that there have been, but a considerable number of prosectuions could have been brought against insurance companies in the City who sell kidnap insurance where the moneys paid go to the Irish Republican Army, for whatever purposes.

Section 10(1) reads:

"If any person—

(a) solicits or invites any other person to give, lend or otherwise make available, whether for consideration or not, any money or other property; or

(b) receives or accepts from any other person, whether for consideration or not, any money or other property,

intending that it shall be applied or used for or in connection with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which this Part of this Act applies, he shall be guilty of an offence."

I submit that control risks represent soliciting and inviting other persons to give money to the Irish Republican Army and, therefore, are in default of the Act and should be prosecuted. I ask the Minister to prosecute them.

Section 10(2) provides:

"If any person gives, lends or otherwise makes available to any other person, whether for consideration or not, any money or other property, knowing or suspecting that it will or may be applied or used for or in connection with the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism to which this Part of this Act applies, he shall be guilty of an offence."

I submit that the words "whether for consideration" in that subsection relate to the release of kidnap victims. Therefore, the insurance companies who are selling the insurance policies in the City are in default of section 10(2) under "Miscellaneous offences" in part III of the Act and should be prosecuted. The authorities refuse to prosecute them. They know they are breaking the law. The Government are being selective in their implementation of the law.

When the young men we send to Ulster——

Ms. Clare Short: Northern Ireland.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: —Northern Ireland are shot at, the public in this country should know that the funding of the munitions that are used by the Irish Republican Army comes in part from insurance companies in the City of London. The loss of lives is being funded by British institutions which should be prosecuted.

11.49 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The speeches and actions of the Home Secretary and of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) show how easy it is for those who see themselves as convinced democrats to end up eroding the very democracy that they seek to defend. I shall not go at length into the speech of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, because much of it was out of order, but I have yet to hear him do anything other than come down—on balance, as he would say—against the extension of the erosion of the democratic rights that

[Mr. Clive Soley]

we have seen eroded over the years. He is always on the wrong side of the scales and the Home Secretary has joined him there.

In his opening comments, the Home Secretary said that this Act was of desperate seriousness to our democracy. If that is so, why are we debating it, yet again, for just one and a half hours between 10.30 pm and midnight? The Home Secretary said when he wrote to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Archer) that he rejected Sir Cyril Philips's suggestion that exclusion orders should be dropped. That recommendation was central to Sir Cyril's report. Therefore, as the hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) said, it is up to the Government to prove that it is necessary to continue with exclusion orders.

In his letter to my right hon. and learned Friend, the Home Secretary made it clear that he had not given sufficient warning to Opposition parties in allowing only 10 days for us to give evidence to Sir Cyril Philips. The Home Secretary regretted that fact in his letter to my right hon. and learned Friend, and in a further letter he rightly corrected another error. The Member of the House of Lords whom he had described as a member of the Labour party was in fact an independent peer, Lord Henderson. I do not make that as a cheap point. I make it because the Government at no time made it clear to the Opposition parties in this House that they were to be given just 10 days in which to give evidence.

If the Home Secretary really regards the Act as so desperately serious, will he ensure that in future the Opposition are given proper notice of the latest date by which representations must be made to Sir Cyril Philips so that we may treat the matter with the seriousness that it deserves?

In the very limited time available, I make just a couple of key points. In so doing, I can do little better than to reiterate one or two of the points made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) in his opening comments.

The Government argue that they need the Act to get information on people whom they can later convict as a result of the Act. In other words, they recognise what many of us have recognised for years—that this Act should really be called the Collection of Information Act. Inasmuch as the Government can point to 32 people whom the courts since 1974 have found guilty and seen fit to sentence to more than a year's imprisonment, the Government have that part of the argument on their side. They can say that the 32 people who committed acts serious enough to warrant more than a year's imprisonment are evidence that the Act is working, although, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Gorton pointed out, it is not good evidence or hard evidence.

Against that, however, we must set the fact—the Government never address themselves to this—that no fewer than 5,324 people out of a total of 6,098 have not been proceeded against in any way at all. The important point is that those 5,324 individuals have families, friends and contacts in the rest of this country and in Ireland. By alienating them from the forces of law and order, the Government are doing more to undermine the fight against terrorism than they achieve by using the Act as a means of collecting information.

Even leaving aside the underlying arguments in the context of Ireland, which I do not have time to cover today, the whole philosophy of any paramilitary unit operating in the way in which the Republican and, to some extent, the Unionist ones operate is to seek to represent those people whom they can alienate from the state that is seeking to win their loyalty.

This is not just a matter of collecting information; it is a battle for hearts and minds. To win that battle, we must address ourselves to Northern Ireland and our view of what position it ought to have in the future and to the people, their relatives and friends, who are so alienated from the forces of law and order that they feel that they cannot commit themselves to the forces of law and order in the fight against terrorism.

Much more needs to be said, but I shall end on this note. If we were facing only international terror from other countries, we would never consider this Act to be necessary. I cannot believe that even this Government would continue with the Act if that were so. We are doing it because of Northern Ireland. Until we address the causes of that problem, and until we address how we are alienating so many of the people whose support we need to resolve that problem, we will continue to get ourselves in increasing difficulty. Above all, we will continue to erode the democaracy of which this country was once proud.

The Home Secretary said that the exclusion order was not internal exile. In all but word, it is. It is a power that has not existed in Britain since mediaeval time. It is time that we got rid of it.

11.55 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): This Act helps the police to fight the evil of terrorism. It helps to prevent terrorism. One need only examine the use of the powers last year and the successes of the police last year—with the Rubens hotel bomb and the threat to our seaside resorts—to know that it helps.

The contentions of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) were quite extraordinary. He said that the Act is a failure because terrorism continues. I cannot imagine a more ludicrous proposition. One might just as well say that the criminal law is useless because crime continues. Acts of terrorism have been prevented.

The right hon. Gentleman compounded his folly by making this ridiculous remark: the Act is being used, but that does not prove that it is needed. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that 20 per cent. of those detained under the Act in 1985 were subsequently charged. There were 94 extended detentions — detentions as a result of the decision of the Secretary of State—and only 30 of the people involved were not charged. Who, in the face of those facts, can say that the Act did not help in the fight against terrorism?

The need for legislation is regrettable. We must not underestimate the inroads on ordinary civil liberties which the Act makes, but we have to keep a sense of proportion. In asking not just for the exclusion powers but for all powers to go, the Opposition have lost all sense of proportion.

To answer the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), the exclusion powers are exercised by the Secretary of State personally. The Government accept Lord Jellicoe's view

that exclusion should be the first power to go. It is an objectionable power and we shall continue to do all that we can to keep down the number of orders and ensure that they are made only in the most serious cases. It is our job to protect innocent people from the murderous attacks of cunning and vicious terrorists.

I have to tell my hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) that the Government are reluctantly, but firmly, convinced that exclusion orders will remain, for at least the next 12 months, an essential instrument of protection. Seven orders were made last year. That is not many, but an increase on the previous year. If the power were discontinued just now, we would be issuing a warm welcome to this country to more than 200 evil people who have been——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 3 (Exempted business).*

The House divided: Ayes 169, Noes 109.

Division No. 82] **[12 midnight**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Benyon, William
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
Maclennan, Robert
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wood, Timothy
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie

Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Fisher and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 (Continuance) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 30th January, be approved.

European Community (Energy Objectives)

12.10 am

The Minister of State, Department of Energy (Mr. Alick Buchanan-Smith): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7163/85 and endorses the adoption of new Community Energy objectives for the period to 1995 as references for the guidance of Member States.

This is the second opportunity that the House has had in recent weeks to debate Community energy issues. The Scrutiny Committee has rightly identified two documents as being of sufficient interest to put before the House as a whole. The first of these, the proposed new rules governing state aids for the coal industry, was debated on Wednesday 6 February. The second, before us this evening, addresses a general framework for the development of all energy resources and offers guidance on the way member states' energy policies might develop over the next decade.

The document before us is entitled "New Community Energy Objectives". It starts with a summary of the changes that have taken place in the availability of energy supplies since the Community agreed in June 1980 on the energy objectives for 1990.

Attention inevitably focuses on the radical changes in the oil market over the past five years. Since the last oil crisis, two trends have become apparent. First, the demand for oil is considerably less, and this reflects a greater medium-term responsiveness to price than anyone expected five years ago. That responsiveness has been marked by the successful introduction of improved energy efficiency technology, and continued switching to other fuels, notably gas in the domestic sector and nuclear and coal in electricity generation. Secondly, oil production in non-OPEC countries has continued to increase, enhancing the availability and diversity of supplies on the world market.

As a result of those changes in the energy market, the objectives outlined for 1990 have already largely been achieved. Oil imports into the Community have been cut by half over the past 10 years. Energy efficiency measures have ended the automatic relationship between energy consumption and economic growth. At the same time solid fuels and nuclear now account for over three quarters of Community electricity generation. The degree of energy self-sufficiency within the Community has increased significantly.

Despite those achievements, the document fairly warns against complacency. It argues that oil demand may once again threaten to overtake available supplies. Therefore, our long-term security of supply must continue to depend upon a diversity of sources of energy, traditional as well as new. The potential for a broad spread of economic investment needs to be maintained.

It is against that background that the Commission proposes that the Community adopt new objectives for 1995. The proposals fall into two categories — "horizontal" objectives, common to all fuels, such as greater integration of the Community energy market, a balance between energy and environmental needs and the promotion of technology; and "sectoral" objectives—a

phrase that I find easier to understand—covering each of the sources of energy, including the important matter of energy efficienty.

It may be helpful if I set out briefly the Government's approach to the setting of those energy objectives. At one extreme there are dangers in having a central plan, a kind of blueprint, aimed at matching supply and demand, fuel by fuel, market by market, and so on for many years.

Experience and history have proved to us that no such plan can ever pass the test of time. All attempts to forecast the energy future with any accuracy have inevitably turned out to be wrong. Grand designs have had to be abandoned. The energy market regularly confounds forecasters because it is, in part, increasingly international. It is extremely complex and, as recent events have proved to us, is subject to violent changes. If we allowed inflexible central plans to be imposed, it would involve high costs to the economy. Such plans would be extremely vulnerable to the unexpected. I do not believe that the task of energy management is well suited to government at national or at international level.

The best mechanism for deciding the best use of energy and for coping with change is the market place. It consists of a myriad of transactions between customers and producers. It is able to adapt to new circumstances far more quickly and efficiently than any bureaucracy. The Government do not therefore believe in attempts to predetermine artificially the energy balance. That should be decided by competition in the market between the various fuels. But it is important that fuel prices should reflect the true economic costs. The market should be as free from price distortions as possible, or customers will not be able to maximise the efficiency with which they use energy. There is also a need to pay heed to external costs, such as social and environmental factors.

Against that background, the Government have always regarded the Community objectives—those agreed in 1980 as well as those under discussion now—as points of reference informing one of member states' own energy policies. The objectives are not intended as binding commitments or as targets which must be reached. The energy resources available to member states and the pattens of consumption within each country differ too widely for uniform goals to make sense for the Community as a whole.

The United Kingdom for example, benefits from indigenous availability of all the major sources of energy —coal, oil, gas and nuclear. Not only can we supply our own needs, but we are substantial exporters to our Community partners. Our energy conservation and renewables programmes are well advanced, reflecting our role as major consumers as well as producers of energy. Other member states, such as the Netherlands, are also significant energy exporters. That is perhaps the one Community country with which we can draw the nearest parallel to Britain. But others still are without resources of their own and rely heavily on imports from within and without the Community. Given this diversity, there cannot be one common objective equally applicable to all member states. Therefore, we need a set of agreed objectives that provide a qualitative assessment of energy priorities. That is an approach that has been fully endorsed by the Energy Council when it last met in November to discuss the objectives. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said then that the objectives should act as a helpful set of references for discussing the polices of member states. They are also an indication of the trends which are developing in the Community as a whole.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I am at a loss. The hon. Gentleman talks about the benefits of objectives and then says that there is no intention of taking any notice of the objectives if the needs of the national interest prevail. If that is the case, why are we here at this hour in the morning discussing objectives when, at the end of the day, they will be thrown through the window?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman is not following what I am saying. They are important objectives against which we can test our policy. I said that it does not make sense to have a single common policy when energy supply and demand is so varied throughout the Community. I talked about objectives for such things as greater self-sufficiency, less reliance on imports from outside the Community, the development of other resources such as renewables and so on. They are all objectives but the degree to which they are achieved is bound to vary in different member states. I think that that can be easily illustrated, as I will attempt to do.

Having dealt with the horizontal aspects, I shall deal with the sectoral objectives. Those suggested in the document seek to break down the trends of general policy into their component fuels. Some figures are suggested, including a possible level of net oil imports and a ceiling on oil use in power stations. Those quantifications are illustrative and can be helpful as markers against which to judge market movements and the relevance of the objectives over time.

It would be wrong, however, to attach importance to any particular figures or to regard them as significant in any policy sense. As I said to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), an example of where this could be misleading is the attempt to set a target figure or range, for example, in nuclear generating capacity. A figure of 40 per cent. has been suggested by the Commission. That is no more than a crude averaging of different nuclear capacities across the Community. France has twice this capacity, the United Kingdom less than half, and five member states have no nuclear generating capacity at all. To try to quote such an unrepresentative average is liable to be misinterpreted as a national objective for each member state. The Government do not therefore think it appropriate to illustrate the nuclear sectoral objective in that way.

The proposed objectives by their nature seek to take a long-term view of energy developments in what we all know is an uncertain world. I hope that I have outlined the advantages of the objectives as well as the dangers of discussing such a document. Provided that Governments avoid the trap of believing that their forecasts will be realised, there is advantage in looking at the range of energy options and the directions the market might take over the next few years.

The opportunity to debate the objectives is not only valuable but timely. The Council of Energy Ministers has already discussed them twice. Discussion in Brussels is focussing on the key issues and the Council is likely to be called upon to decide a final text within the next couple of months. This short debate gives the House the opportunity to express its views. I welcome that opportunity, and I commend the document to hon. Members.

12.25 am

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): As the Minister of State said, we are debating proposals for an EEC energy policy and its objectives, even though the Government have no coherent energy policy. That is the debate's starting point. We are talking about an energy plan—a blueprint—which the Minister has rejected. That makes nonsense of the document.

Britain is in a unique position with regard to energy requirements and production within the EEC, because we are the only country that produces its own oil, gas and coal. As the Minister said, other countries produce some or none of those commodities.

I have read, as the Minister probably has, the last debate on the EEC directive in 1979, which led to the 1980 discussions with the EEC. In the 1979 debate the House was considering what the position would be in 1985, which is just a few weeks ago. The forecast bore no relation to what happened in 1985 and what we face in 1986. I am worried, because if the EEC had its own way we could end up with an energy policy which could be as damaging to Britain as the common agricultural policy is. We must guard against that.

The document does not address itself to the position in Europe, which is faced with falling oil prices. Will recent events be discussed when the Council of Ministers meets, and if so, what line will the Government take? We are entitled to know, because tonight's debate is to enable us to give the Government our views in time for the meeting of the Council of Ministers. I am not clear, from what the Minister said, what the Government's attitude will be, not least because oil prices will be an important factor.

Britain is an oil producing country with a substantial energy surplus. I am worried about British refining capacity. It is being closed on a large scale, not least because of some of the actions of our EEC partners, for example, in Rotterdam. That is having an effect on refineries in Wales, Scotland and elsewhere. It is undermining the industry's ability to export added-value downstream products. Given its indigenous oil supplies, the United Kingdom should be exporting refined products to the rest of the Community and elsewhere, rather than merely refining for the British market. Instead, large amounts of North sea crude oil are being exported to be refined outside the United Kingdom. Much of it then returns to Britain as refined oil or added-value products.

The EEC proposals advocate greater interconnection between gas and electricity systems and increased trade. Because of the privatisation of the gas industry, we have been asking the Government for some considerable time what their attitude is to the import and export of gas. Will the Minister tell us the Government's attitude to the EC proposals? Will he advise the House of the Government's position on the crucial issue of depletion policy for both gas and oil?

A major aspect of the document, and one of the only relevant firm figures in it relates to nuclear policy. I was pleased to see that the Minister rubbished that. The document proposes that nuclear generation of electricity should be almost doubled by the year 1995, providing 40 per cent. of our electricity. We are worried about that. We are self-sufficient in coal, and we oppose the development of the pressurised water reactor. We believe that the proportion of electricity generated by nuclear power in the United Kingdom should not increase. We oppose the document's proposal, and, indeed, the Minister made nonsense of it.

Five countries in the EC do not have any nuclear power. France has 80 or 90 per cent., and we produce about 20 per cent. During the miners' strike that was increased to 25 or 28 per cent. Although the document may be for consideration only, there may be pressures in the EC to develop nuclear power and to impose that type of development on countries, such as the United Kingdom. I put our opposition to that firmly on the record.

Recently, we debated the EC proposals for the coal industry. It is impossible to discuss European energy objectives without referring to coal. The document continues to accept the importation of coal into Europe, while advocating the restructuring of our industry, and maintains that the price of imported coal will continue to be set by competition in the world market. As my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) pointed out on 5 February, coal imported from South Africa, Poland and Colombia is being dumped in Europe at prices that bear no relation to market forces. We cannot accept that. At the Council of Ministers' meeting the Minister must put that point firmly.

The document also calls for a 25 per cent. improvement in energy efficiency. I would have thought that the Minister would want to say something about that, especially as his Department has embarked on Energy Efficiency Year, and perhaps he will do so when he replies.

The document promotes the increased use of fluoridised bed combustion and other technologies which would make coal burning more environmentally acceptable. That is an interesting proposal, and I should like to hear the Government's attitude to it. Will the Government put money into such a development? What about developments in coal gasification and liquefaction which the document advocates? If there is a member state which can develop those two processes, it is the United Kingdom, with its large surplus of coal. That is where the future of coal lies.

The EC document advocates the continuing promotion of research and development and the demonstration of new technologies and renewables. Will the Minister assure the House that the so-called hot rocks experiment in Cornwall will continue to receive funding from the Department of energy, and that the expertise developed there will not be transferred to the United States because the Government are unwilling to continue support? That is another matter that should be raised in the Council of Ministers. The people involved in the development in Cornwall, which is an area in need of employment, are threatened with unemployment because of the removal of subsidies and support.

Combined heat and power is another idea that should be developed. We should say to the EC that that is what we are doing, and what we will continue to do, and that we do not accept a policy that binds us in an impossible position to other member states.

Although the document discusses a framework for coherent national energy policies, it is not feasible. As I have said, the Government do not have an energy policy. They do not develop a policy or intervene to propose a policy.

We believe that the debate is important, but we ask the Government to protect British interests in the EC. That is

their job. When they protect British interests, they protect hundreds of thousands of jobs in the United Kingdom energy industry. We await the report from the Council of Ministers, and we hope that the Secretary of State will take note of the points made by the Opposition this evening.

12.37 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): It is typical that we are debating this subject in a packed House at peak viewing time, given that Britain is the most energy-rich country in Europe and that how we manage our energy resources is the most significant and important basis of our economy. I am not surprised at the hour, because the timing of the debate is in accord with the Government's general attitude to this important industry and its importance to the British economy. It suits the Government's book very well to have a debate when nobody is listening and nobody can take on board the irresponsibility of the Government's policy.

The Minister moved the motion in the following terms: we should take note of the document, pick out what suits us, leave out what does not suit us and allow the market to sort out everything. As the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) has said, for the Government to take any view on a European energy strategy or policy they would first be required to have a policy of their own. No such policy exists and the Government pride themselves on that fact.

The background to the debate of events this week highlights more than ever the need for an energy strategy. The oil price has collapsed from a peak in 1979 of just under 40 dollars a barrel to about 15 dollars a barrel and it is still falling. The implications of that are extremely significant, not least to the coal industry. In the short term, a free marketeer might be able to say, "Coal is no longer a competitive fuel. It is no longer viable. Indeed, perhaps we should be burning more oil and producing less coal." Taking the logic forward, he might say, "We need to close even more collieries, it may be time to convert existing coal-fired power stations to oil and we should build new oil-fired power stations." Why do we not do that? Presumably, in the short term, the Minister will say, "This is an aberration in the market, and we must see whether it is a long-term trend."

That uncertainty requires the Government to take a strategic view over a long period of approximately what mix of fuels we should use and how we should handle them. What should be the role for coal, oil, nuclear power and gas? Any responsible Government would do that. It is not a matter of saying, as the Minister tried to suggest, "We the Conservative Government believe that the market can sort it all out, and those terrible Socialists want to plan every detail." We need a framework within which at least broad planning is considered while recognising the factors of the market, but not the short-term volatility which is based on completely unpredictable and uncertain events. The Government must have a much more coherent policy for all our energy requirements.

The EC document states that the objective for the 1990s is that oil production in the Community should be less than one third of energy consumption from oil imports. If that is the case, we are entitled to ask whether our present level of production is compatible with that objective. If the Government's objective is to rip as much oil out of the North sea as fast as possible, regardless of the price, what will happen in 1998 when there is less oil left? Does that not contradict the Community's objectives? What happened to the objective of net self-sufficiency? Last year, we produced 37 million tonnes more than our self-sufficiency requirements, and the amount is increasing.

It is worth taking account of what has happened in the oil market during the past six months and what the implications are for the United Kingdom economy. In 1985, the average price of oil was $29 a barrel. Our average production was about 2·5 million barrels a day, and the pound was worth, on average, $1·25. The average daily value of oil production in 1985 was £58 million. The packed Galleries show how important that is to the British economy.

However, the price of oil is now $15 a barrel. Production is still at that peak—for the calculation, let us say that it is still 2·5 million barrels a day, although it is slightly higher. The dollar is falling against the pound, which is an added complication. We used to be able to console ourselves when the oil price fell by saying that the exchange rate would substantially compensate us for that. That is not happening now. On the contrary, the pound is strengthening against the dollar, further aggravating the effect of the falling oil price. The average daily value of oil production is now only £27 million—a reduction of £31 million—or 53 per cent. in a few months.

No wonder the Chancellor is worried about his Budget. No wonder the Government's whole economic strategy threatens to fall to tatters against that kind of change. Against that background, the reaction of the Government is total and abject unconcern and complacency. They say, "It is nothing to do with us: is is entirely a factor for the market and there is nothing we can do about it." This is the single most important product of Britain. Its price and production level is crucial to the basis of our economy, yet the Government says it has nothing to do with them.

As recently as yesterday the members of OPEC launched another appeal to the non-OPEC countries to meet and discuss the implications of the falling oil price and current levels of production. I tabled some questions to the Government asking what representations they had received from OPEC and Saudi Arabia and what responses the Government had given. The reply that I got was none and none. I asked, were the Government prepared to meet and discuss the matter and the answer was one word, no. The Government are not prepared even to discuss the matter. That is an absurd position. Even if the discussions are not clear, and even if the outcome is not certain, to refuse to talk seems utterly unbelievable. That stance is in direct conflict with the document we are debating. Paragraph 28 on page 15 says:

> "It is therefore right that the Community should continue with its policy of establishing good relations with countries and inter-governmental bodies in this region"

that is, the Gulf region. It goes on:

> "The long-standing relations with the OAPEC should be further strengthened, and arrangements for exchanging information with OPEC should be established."

It is difficult to see how that Community objective could conceivably be achieved by a Government that are not even prepared to discuss or admit that any contact can or should take place with these organisations. That is an absurd position that most people outside this country cannot comprehend and regard as complacent irresponsibility.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East touched on the issue of nuclear power and the objective that the Community should aim for 40 per cent. of its electricity generation from nuclear power. In Scotland, a new nuclear

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

power station is to be commissioned at Torness. Before that power station comes on stream, we in Scotland already derive 40 per cent. of our electricity from nuclear power, and the Government are anxious to stoke it up even further. The Minister told us that perhaps he did not wish to object to the 40 per cent. objective. Why do we in Scotland have to be singled out as the only part of the Community that has not only achieved but exceeded that percentage?

Nuclear power is topical at the moment, perhaps regrettably. The nuclear power industry is beleaguered, and everybody I meet in that industry is demoralised and on the defensive. We have established nuclear power stations over the years, and when we embarked on this new nuclear technology, the objective was to get into the peaceful application of a technology that was developed for warlike uses. In the 1950s there was a great deal of enthusiasm for that peaceful objective and a great deal of money was put into it. But after decades of investment in the industry, we have not got the results that we might reasonably have expected from that substantial investment.

Worse than that, it might have been well argued by any Government that, taking a long view, we possibly ought to be in this technology, that by definition oil was a finite resource and that most of our basic energy resources would eventually run out, and perhaps in one or two generations we would inevitably have to make more use of nuclear power.

That argument would be extremely cogent if we were developing British technology, but all that we shall do in the meantime is import American technology with which the Americans themselves are not prepared to continue. Given that we have oil, gas, coal, wind, wave and an opportunity for greater energy efficiency, I cannot understand why we are going ahead with the development of an expensive nuclear power station using imported technology.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): My hon. Friend has mentioned some of the alternatives open to us. Is he aware that the firm James Howden Ltd. recently won considerable export orders from the United States for wind turbines? Indeed, the development of wind energy in my constituency and other parts of the United Kingdom is showing great potential. In view of the small amount of investment in the development of wind energy compared with the vast amount put into nuclear energy, especially the fast reactor, over many years, would it not be a better investment of public funds if more resources were chanelled into alternative energy sources rather than continually feeding the nuclear energy industry?

Mr. Bruce: I agree with my hon. Friend. On more than one occasion in this House I have said that if the alternative technologies were given an investment comparable to that for nuclear power, we might make more rapid progress and go some way towards meeting the EEC's objectives.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I have a great deal of sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's view. I am concerned that, although the Liberal party is usually consistent on this matter, the other half of the alliance appears to take an entirely different view.

Mr. Bruce: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has the temerity to make such an intervention in the week when the Labour party spokesman on the environment is taking a diametrically opposite view to his party on what is happening at Sellafield.

My position has been, and remains, consistent. I think that, in the long term, we are likely to need nuclear power. However, I wish to make it quite clear that the nuclear industry has had a great deal of investment, but, as yet, has failed to solve many of the problems or to produce the advantages and advances that were promised. If we are not developing British technology — which we will not be doing if we opt for the PWR — it is time that we switched our investment into other areas of energy that show greater potential.

I will go further than that. After the problems at Sellafield, there is a total lack of confidence among the public in the industry's ability to handle reprocessing technology. Against that background, it would be crass foolhardiness to go ahead with the reprocessing facility at Dounreay when there are so many troubles at Sellafield. It will not be possible to persuade the people of Scotland that that development will be in their interests. Indeed, Sellafield should be shut down until there is a full inquiry into its safety.

In the process of forcing the pace, the Government may well endanger the survival of Dounreay as an entity because they will draw attention to the whole industry and its problems. That would be a pity because, as I have said, in the long run we may well need that technology. If we pull out of the development altogether, we may regret it. The Government are not acting as a friend of the industry; they are forcing the pace in a way that is contrary to the clear will of the public. That is both unnecessary and unjustified. Now is the time to call a halt and to put our investment into areas where there will be a much greater productive return.

I do not apologise for taking some time to speak. I feel —although the Government clearly do not—that this is a subject of vital importance that needs to be debated more fully. It is the difference between bankruptcy and survival for this country, yet the Government try to duck and dodge their responsibility, and have done so ever since they came to power.

The market cannot be left alone. There must be some strategic input from the Government about what the right energy mix should be. The EEC, even if we choose to differ on one or two points, acknowledges that a strategic objective is necessary for the Community.

For the Government to come here and make the comments that they have, especially given their record, is a piece of cheek. I, for one, am sick and tired of hearing the Government's explanation for the lack of an energy policy and their unwillingness to acknowledge that in the real world responsible Governments would at least take a responsible view, especially in volatile and uncertain situations where the market can destroy long-term strategic opportunities. It cannot be allowed to take its full toll regardless of any of the implications.

I welcome any opportunity to advance thinking on energy planning. Last week I was at an open seminar organised by the alliance and attended by some people who are not members of any political party but who are actively involved in the energy industry. One person who was anxious to point out that he was not a member of a political party said that we will not get a realistic advance

on energy policy and energy planning which will utilise our rich resources until we get rid of this Government. That has to be our objective. Although the Minister will no doubt attack me and try to tear me to bits, I believe that he and his Government are an obstacle to the good management of our crucial resources.

12.55 am

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I agree with much of what the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said, particularly in his concluding remarks. I am glad that I did not attend the alliance seminar on energy policy. Anyone who was not directly involved must have left it in a state of bewilderment, if not political schizophrenia.

The hon. Gentleman was right to deplore the time at which this debate is taking place. The Minister might like to sleep, but he will subscribe to the view that it is in the interests of the Government that serious debates are better held late at night when they escape attention.

It is interesting that the Community can claim to be in sight of the achievement of its 1980 agreed objectives. Possibly they were sufficiently imprecise as to facilitate achievement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) was right to offer criticism and to suggest that some of the commitments may originally have been too sweeping. Nevertheless, one might view the current state of energy policy in the EC as in some ways being a little more intelligent than our own. The objectives of the EC are imperfect, and perhaps imprecise, but there is a positive aspect to the approach. The document before us demonstrates that on balance it is better to have a policy. Unfortunately, we do not seem to have had any discernible or intelligent policy.

Obviously the Community's assessment is broadly based. We may differ from, and need to challenge, some of the objectives, but I trust that the target of a further 25 per cent. improvement in energy efficiency will be reached. The United Kingdom should make a marked contribution after six years spent largely on brutal reliance upon pricing as the principal determinant of conservation.

One advantage of the Community's approach is that it does not depend upon a hand to mouth response to movements in oil prices. If Her Majesty's Government were to allow oil price levels to determine long-term policy, the national advantage could be enormous. It is timely, therefore, for Europe to maintain the view that imports of oil must be reduced and reliance upon oil must contract. I hope that that view will have some influence upon our Government, because they need, and have needed for some time, to examine urgently their depletion rate and to curtail the now less profitable but still excessive level of oil exports.

It would be stretching charity too far to refrain from commenting that the oil trade, with its too high place in the world oil trade league, has not served us well, since the yield has contributed to short-term requirements, while at the same time our levels of industrial investment have been dreadful.

Investment in coal has been upped and maintained—the Government have frequently boasted about that. That has created an opportunity which logic suggests should be grasped in full to accord with the EEC's objective of maintaining or increasing the share of energy consumption commanded by coal. I am not sure that the Government have fulfilled their obvious obligation to remind Europe firmly of the staggering achievements of the coal industry. The closure of high-cost capacity has created sharp distress in the coalfields, but it has reduced costs. Unfortunately, the Community does not seem to be fully aware of the change.

There is an urgent need for Ministers to correct any wrong impression such as that implied in paragraph 31, which refers to production costs exceeding imported prices. That misconception must be challenged. The Government must stress that the Community cannot expect coal to be produced in Europe at below the price at which it is sold in Europe, which may in turn be below the price at which it is produced abroad. We must insist that some priority is given to indigenous energy and not allow a substantial dependency to develop upon dumped coal from abroad.

United Kingdom coal prices are now not far off, or are, perhaps just about the same as, the cost of imported coal. It must be accepted that that is a substantial achievement and provides grounds for further consideration of the matter in Brussels. At the same time, the point that I made the other day must be strengthened and acted upon. Our French partners must be advised that they cannot pretend to command the diplomatic initiative in deploring conditions in South Africa, while at the same time developing businesses to enhance the trade of South African coal in Europe.

Paragraphs 46 and 53 are very important, in that they relate to the development of technology to show that the environmental impact of fossil fuel combustion can be dramatically changed. For this reason, we should hesitate before indulging in any obsessive concentration on nuclear development. I believe that the economy, the environment and the international interest could be very well served if new coal-fired generating capacity is developed embodying the latest available technology in fluidised bed and low nitrogen combustion, as a sign of good faith to our Scandinavian neighbours, which may well have substantial commercial advantages. That would also assist the industrial base, which needs orders, and maintain a capacity which would continue to be internationally significant.

Given the wealth of our energy self-sufficiency, the United Kingdom does not need to go far along the road towards a 40 per cent. contribution from nuclear power, especially in view of the need to avoid the huge costs involved in such development and the reliance on the present generation of nuclear reactors. As I have said, we must have industrial orders, and a full and vigorous programme of CHP would be welcomed. There should also be further development of renewable reserves, which merit a higher place in the Government's assessments.

The national interest has certainly not been so well served in Britain as in Europe. Too much has been left to market forces. My right hon. Friend the Member for Salford, East recognised this when he reminded us of the astonishing and dreadful ebb of United Kingdom refinery capacity. The figures reveal the stark horror of that decline. In 1979 we produced 77 million tonnes of oil offshore, and we refined 84·5 million tonnes. In the first 11 months of 1985 we produced 117 million tonnes—an enormous increase—but the amount refined in United Kingdom refineries fell to 65 million tonnes. That appalling decline makes a mockery of the oil policies pursued by the Government, who surrendered responsibility and sat supinely by while the effect of cartels developed enormously to the nation's disadvantage.

[Mr. Peter Hardy]

It is time that we expressed a firm view in Europe, but it is also time that we expressed a firm attitude to policies here. If we served our interests as well as Europe seems to have served its own interests, this country would be better off. Perhaps we should emulate the priorities that Europe proposes. It is astonishing that with all the energy self-sufficiency that we enjoy we have become the sick man of Europe while our oil reserves have been extracted to a fantastic extent. In the mid-1970s, or even in the late 1970s, no one could have imagined that Britain would be brought to the sorry pass in which it is now placed. One reason for that is that the Government have demonstrated that they are not competent to operate an energy policy. They have not even tried to follow one.

1.4 am

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): The general point of the document can be summed up briefly. It is that energy should be provided when required at an acceptable cost. It is also important to have a secure supply of resources to stop the threat of shortages that eventually affect the quality of life and undermine the economy. More specifically, the document speaks of strengthening the internal market and transport policy and securing the development of industry and job creation.

I should like to ask the Minister some questions relating to solid fuel, because that is the type of energy with which I am involved. The Commission would like to

"maintain and if possible increase, the market share of solid fuels"

because, since 1973, Community coal production has fallen by 16 per cent. while coal imports have doubled to 20 per cent. That must be considered. The statement seems all right at first, but it could be altered slightly. I hope that the Minister will bear that in mind in Europe in a few weeks' time. I believe that by inserting the words "Community-produced" before "solid fuels", the sentence would be a little clearer and it would satisfy me, if not others. The sentence would then read:

"maintain and if possible increase, the market share of Community-produced solid fuels"

That is vital for Britain and the coal mining industry. Paragraph 73 of the document shows that Community production has fallen by 16 per cent. The real use of coal has dropped by 5·5 per cent. Why will we allow, as paragraph 29 says:

"imports of coal . . . from third countries . . . to increase"?

Is not an increase of 189 per cent. in imported coal during the past 10 years enough? Is that not terribly high for a country that sits on coal? Will the Minister accept paragraph 29, or put it in for discussion?

What effort have the Government made to assist corporations that are trying to develop new technologies which can cope with the tighter environmental standards that we all subscribe to? What has been done to assist those experimenting with coal-water mixtures? That is a vital matter.

In 1980, the Prime Minister attended the Venice summit. Paragraph 12 of the communiqué said:

"Together we intend to double coal production and use by early 1990".

What has happened to that prediction? According to paragraph 80 of the document,

"Solid fuels will play a key rôle in the electricity sector . . . the consumption of solid fuels in this sector could increase by 40 million tons of coal equivalent by 1995."

What measures are being taken to ensure that that is Community-produced coal rather than imported coal? Its source is not stated clearly. That, too, is vital. If no provisions are made, and the majority of the increase goes to imported coal, will the market be in the same situation as in the early 1970s, but relying on imported coal rather than oil? Will we be in a similar position if we do not depend on the production of our own solid fuel?

There are different ways of fulfilling this increase in tonnage, but the only correct way—even though it may not suit the Government's philosophy—is to plan ahead. Coal cannot be obtained overnight. It cannot be produced in a factory. It now takes 10 to 15 years to open a mine. We must therefore plan well ahead. Market forces do not come into it, because without proper planning one cannot produce to satisfy demand. There is nothing wrong with Britain supplying the extra 40 million tonnes in Europe, but that means planning ahead.

Equally, it is no good our saying that we shall increase productivity. There is such a thing as price, and an increase in productivity without an increase in production will solve nothing. In a capital-intensive industry such as mining, increased productivity and decreased production is likely to increase unit costs unless all the capital is written of. Therefore, there must be increased productivity and increased production at the same time so that unit costs are kept down. That is essential.

We should allow the British mining industry to produce more tonnage. If the Government give the industry the money that it needs to invest, it can give Europe all the energy it desires without the necessity of going to the Third world. I hope that the Minister makes those points when he goes to Europe.

1.12 am

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): I did not intend to speak, but I asked the Minister a question about the objectives of the EEC and the objectives of the United Kingdom. I listened intently to what he said, but he did not answer the question to my satisfaction. Has this debate been a charade, or does the right hon. Gentleman intend to pursue the objectives that he outlined?

If the Government have objectives, they must get shot of market forces. Alternatively, if they allow market forces to dictate to this country, there can be no objectives because market forces fluctuate over the years if not month by month. If market forces are to determine the size and shape of the United Kingdom's energy policy, the Minister must convince me that it is worth while following these EEC objectives.

The only common policy in the EEC seems to relate to agriculture. Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should have a word with his gaffer to see whether aspects of farming policy can be incorporated into energy policy. If we had such co-ordination, no one would criticise the Government.

I have heard the words "forward planning" on a number of occasions, but I am afraid that it is a foreign language to the Government. They are incapable of forward planning. If they had forward planning, they would not be squandering the oil reserves and other of our energy reserves, but would be making sure that our capacities are used in a planned way without any outside interference from market forces. Will the Minister tell us whether he

intends to let the market forces determine our energy policies, or whether he will have objectives to determine the energy policy?

1.16 am

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall respond immediately to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) by assuring him that the Government are committed to objectives in an energy policy. I thought that I had earlier made it clear that the Government are not, and do not believe that it is common sense to be, committed to a detailed policy in the form of a blueprint. As the right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said, the objectives laid out at the time of our last debate do not bear comparision with what has happened since then. We subscribe to many of the objectives, but it does not make sense to try to apply a detailed policy.

We pay attention to debates such as this, and the points that are raised will be considered by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself and, where appropriate, we will make sure that they are represented in the Council of Ministers. A number of detailed points have been raised that I shall want to consider further before the Council meets.

The right hon. Member and the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), for Doncaster, North (Mr. Welsh) and for Don Valley referred in particular to the problems of the coal industry. This was a subject of another debate, and was dealt with in much more detail by the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie). I know that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary took on board the arguments and views set out.

We are committed to the objective of utilising properly our indigenous resources—in the European Community we are the country most blessed with them. Here, I refute what the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said about a lack of strategy. We should not be putting the money that we are into the coal industry if we did not believe that there was a long-term future for that industry, but, as he and the House know, our resources of coal extend not into decades longer but probably centuries longer than our resources of oil. We should be foolish to ignore that. If the Government had no strategy, we would not be putting resources into coal to the extent that we are, and we would not have the commitment to create a viable coal industry. That is our commitment, and we hope to be able to succeed because we believe that it is in the country's interests to exploit those resources for those who work in the industry in the most effective way possible.

A considerable number of other coal issues were raised, and I assure the House that in the Community we shall continue to stand up for the objectives of our energy policy, as we have in the past, and for the interests of our industry, particularly where funds have been available for development, whether they are of a social or other nature. When attending the Council of Ministers, I have argued to make sure that we get a share of what is available and ensure it reflects the importance and position of the industry. So often, self-sufficiency is considered in terms of oil and gas resources, but coal resources are equally important.

Mr. Hardy: I would not challenge that, but many of us are worried about whether the Government are making it clear to Europe that it should respect the advance that has been made in the British coal industry and recognise that it should not require British coal prices, which must reflect the costs of production, to be below the price of coal which is now being dumped in European markets.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Coal has been discussed at meetings in Europe that I have attended and, although criticism has often been thrown at us about the average production costs of our coal, which by some standards appears to be high, I have been at pains to point out that production costs at our better pits and those under development are well below the European average. Therefore, we can demonstrate that Britain's coal industry has a long-term future and that we shall continue to support it. I take on board the hon. Gentleman's point.

The fall in oil prices is a matter of interest to the Community. It has already been discussed with the Commission. It is interesting that it believes that the position must be watched and monitored but does not consider that any intervention by it would be appropriate at this stage. No doubt that matter will be discussed at the Council of Ministers. As the hon. Gentleman said, one must consider falling oil prices in relation to the effect that that has on the balance of the energy market and on other fuels.

The hon. Member for Gordon dwelt on that subject more than others and he must remember, as other hon. Members do, that Britain is not only an oil-producing nation; we are a considerable energy-consuming nation and a considerable oil-consuming nation. One of Britain's most dramatic experiences was the hike in the oil price in the 1970s. It triggered off the world recession and Britain's trade and economic difficulties. People do not understand that a fall in the oil price is bad but that equally, as a consumer country, that brings benefit to many of our industries. It can bring benefit to employment and to consumers, domestic and otherwise.

If one adopts the view that I regret the hon. Member for Gordon largely takes, that Britain is a producer country, that is to forget and ignore an important consumer interest. Britain and Norway have exactly the same view on this and their interests are not the same as those of the OPEC countries. Of course, we have informal contacts with individual OPEC members. There always have been and they continue. But to have any kind of formal dealings with OPEC in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests would not be in the best interests of Europe or Norway. The Governments of both countries agree about that.

Mr. Orme: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he and the Secretary of State had a meeting with the Norwegian Minister for energy and that the United Kingdom's policy is absolutely in line with Norway's?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: My right hon. Friend and I met the Norwegian Minister during his visit yesterday to London, as was reported in today's newspapers. There is no difference in policy between Britain and Norway.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The right hon. Gentleman said that Britain was also an oil-consuming nation and that consumers can enjoy advantages from a fall in oil prices. Does he agree that it would be regrettable if the Government sought to recoup some of the lost revenue resulting from decreased oil prices through increases in the duty on petrol greater than the increase as a result of index linking?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I do not think that that will be a matter for the Council of Ministers when it meets in March. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will receive much advice on this and other matters between now and Budget day.

The hon. Member for Gordon disagrees with the policies of this Government and the previous one in going for a fast rate of exploration and development of our resources. I make one point to the hon. Gentleman that was made in a recent letter to a newspaper—we have at least had the benefit of much of the oil produced over some years at a high price. Most importantly—unfortunately, the hon. Member for Gordon does not recognise the importance of this, but I note it from a constituency point of view—we have seen the development in Britain of the supply industry, providing the goods and services that the oil companies and industries require.

Mr. Orme: And refineries.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I shall come to that.

Britain's industry is competitive with the rest of the world in a way that Norway's industry is not. Without our policies, we would not have had those benefits. I have no doubt from talking to the oil companies and the supply industries that they do not disagree with the policy that this Government and the previous Government have followed.

Mr. Bruce: Of course I recognise the benefits we have had. Two points arise from that. First, if it was right for us to sell when the price was high, is there not an argument for holding back when the price is low until the price recovers? I recognise that the supply industry has benefited. Secondly, if the price collapses and stays down at $11 or $12 a barrel, might that not depress the industry's prosperity?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The hon. Gentleman has not begun to understand what the oil industry is all about. Does he not realise that the oil industry made development plans, undertook exploration and invested billions of pounds on the understanding that the Government would not interfere in the commercial decisions the firms took? That has been the recognised policy from the beginning. If it is changed, we shall destroy one of the great assets we have in the North sea—policy stability. That means that there is little doubt that, no matter how serious conditions in the oil industry world wide become, our offshore industry will be attractive. I know from my contacts with the oil industry—I am sure that they do not differ from the contacts of the hon. Member for Gordon—that the United Kingdom's offshore industry is the most attractive in the world, not least because of our policies.

I urge the hon. Member for Gordon to consult more closely with the supply side of the industry and the oil companies. I think that he will find that there is little support for the type of policies which he sought to advocate and which I do not believe will be in the interests of Britain.

Mr. Redmond: During the discussions with the Norwegian Minister, did the right hon. Gentleman discuss the sale of Norwegian gas to Britain?

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: So far as I know, Norway does not yet intend becoming a member of the European Community. Therefore, I do not think that that subject will arise at the meeting of the Council of Ministers.

I was interested in what the hon. Member for Gordon said about nuclear power. I think that the House and those outside will take note of the ambivalent attitude of the hon. Gentleman towards that. He tried to draw credit to Scotland by saying that Scotland has a higher percentage of nuclear generation than the rest of the United Kingdom and that it was much closer to the European objective, but he failed to say that that is one of the reasons why electricity in Scotland has tended to be cheaper than in other parts of the United Kingdom. There is no doubt that for both industrial and domestic consumers in Scotland that has been an advantage. I hope that industrial and domestic consumers in Scotland will note that the hon. Gentleman is against an extension of electricity generation which is to the benefit of consumers in Scotland.

Perhaps what is most significant is that the hon. Member for Gordon is opposed to Sellafield and supports the closure of that plant on the north-west coast of England. I take note of that and I hope that those outside the House also take note. I shall say no more than that.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East raised a number of points, and I apologise if I have not covered all of them. Some of them are certainly important. I acknowledge what he said about energy efficiency. It is correct that our objective of 20 per cent. is a little lower than the European objective and over a slightly longer time scale, but we believe that this country can achieve its aim. It is certainly an objective which my right hon. Friend, myself and my colleagues in the Department of Energy will pursue with considerable vigour.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the subject of refineries. That concerns me because in Britain we have carried through a degree of rationalisation in the refinery industry which is as great as that which has taken place in almost any other country in Europe. One or two other countries which came slightly later to this area are having to carry that through now. That policy has been painful, particularly for jobs in certain areas, but it means that we have a more viable industry which is better able to compete in a very competitive world market.

I am concerned about the threat of competition from imports of petroleum products from the middle east. We have discussed that in a relevant European context. It is important that we work with our colleagues in Europe and with our colleagues in the International Energy Agency to ensure that we meet any challenge fairly and share the burdens with our partners in Europe and in the IEA.

We have had a useful debate. I have not covered all the points. As the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, there is an element of schizophrenia in the discussion. I am criticised for my earlier remarks because it appeared that I was picking what suited Britain and leaving out what did not and yet I am told to stand up for British interests and ensure that the interests of British industry are properly represented. I believe that that is right. I worked for four years in agriculture and, as I said to the hon. Member for Don Valley, my experiences there do not encourage me to seek an extension of similar policies to energy.

I assure the House that, where the objectives are in the interests of Britain and in the broader interests of Europe, we shall support them. At the same time, it is important fully to represent Britain's interests because of the importance of our energy industries to our interests which are not necessarily the same as the interests of other countries in Europe.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 7163/85 and endorses the adoption of new Community Energy objectives for the period to 1995 as references for the guidance of Member States.

Ijaz Ahmed Malik and Gurmail Singh

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

1.34 am

Mr. Stan Thorne (Preston): I am grateful to Mr. Speaker for giving me the opportunity to mention two constituency cases. The first case with which I wish to deal is that of Ijaz Ahmed Malik, who is a cousin of Robina Kauser, a constituent of mine, who is a British subject. Mr. Malik was originally from Jhelum city in Pakistan. Robina purchased a house in Preston so that she could marry Mr. Malik and settle down with him.

Mr. Malik arrived on 14 January 1984 to visit an uncle, and clearly had it in mind to establish further contact with his intended wife. They were interviewed on 24 May 1984 in Preston, having gone through a civil marriage on 21 February, and a religious marriage in April 1984. That interview led to the Minister describing Mr. Malik as an illegal immigrant. Against that background the Minister had to decide about his removal.

A child was born to that couple in April 1985, and is now about 10 months old. The marriage was arranged in accordance with Asian custom and practice. On 29 July 1985 Mr. Malik departed voluntarily taking with him his wife and child. His wife was in employment at the time, but she obtained leave to go to Pakistan with him. She subsequently returned and resumed her employment.

I am interested in seeing that that family is reunited with the least possible delay. Representations have been made to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I understand that an application by Mr. Malik for re-entry is being considered on 1 April this year.

The Minister is not directly involved in the entry certificate procedure, which is a matter for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, but I hope that he will do whatever he can and exercise such influence as he may have to ensure that the family is reunited with the least possible delay.

The second case is possibly more difficult. It is more pressing. It is the case of Gurmail Singh. He was engaged to Rabinder Kaur Geeta. Rabinder went to India on 12 April 1983. I emphasise that date because we are talking about a case that has some history. They married on 20 June 1983. It was a genuine marriage in accordance with their custom, and the husband and wife were interviewed on 12 March 1984. Unfortunately, because of the nature of that interview and some of the answers by Gurmail Singh to the questions put to him by the officer examining the case, he was subsequently refused entry. The wife returned to the United Kingdom on 2 April, and a child was born on 19 September 1984.

The Minister has alleged in no uncertain terms that the primary purpose of the marriage was to gain entry to the United Kingdom. I have known the family for some time, although not for a long time. Clearly there is a strong bond of affection between the couple. Gurmail arrived on 3 November 1985, and on 15 November they were both interviewed in Liverpool. Unfortunately, during the interview the immigration officer asked Mrs. Singh whether I had told her to invite her husband for a visit to the United Kingdom on the basis that I would see what could be done to help them. Such a question is completely out of order. I certainly made no such suggestion to her, and I suspect that it may be a breach of privilege for

[Mr. Stan Thorne]

immigration officers to ask questions regarding the activities of Members of Parliament. The civil marriage took place on 9 January 1986.

The Minister seeks to remove Mr. Singh, leaving his wife—a British subject—with their son, who is now 18 months old. It is a genuine marriage. Only a few days ago the local press carried a pleasant picture of the husband, wife and son, together with an interview given by Mrs. Singh, in which she stated that they were married three years previously because they loved one another, that they had a baby because they loved one another, but that now they must live apart. Clearly she feels strongly about that and so do I.

The Minister may argue that the immigration rules have been followed, but a good family will be broken up. That is not the sort of policy to be pursued in a country which claims to be Christian. It is an illustration of man's inhumanity to man, and is in marked contrast to the case of Mr. Rabha, a Libyan, who was allowed to rejoin his family in the United Kingdom. He was present at St. James's square during the terrorist incident which resulted in the murder of WPC Fletcher. The Minister's decision was that he should not be readmitted, but subsequently an adjudicator took a different decision, and Mr. Rabha is now settled here with his family.

Despite the immigration rules, the Minister should look at the case of Gurmail Singh compassionately and do what he can, even at this late hour, to ensure that the family remains united in Preston.

1.43 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): The hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne) spoils his case and does not do himself justice when he drags in the case of the Libyan, which has nothing to do with the instant case. Mr. Rabha was refused permission to come to the United Kingdom by the Home Office but exercised his right of appeal and was allowed to come because an adjudicator found in his favour. This case deals with two people who do not qualify to come to the United Kingdom.

Obviously, the cases are important to the people involved, but they are also of public importance because the public is entitled to expect our immigration laws to be enforced, and the rules approved by Parliament to be properly applied. These are both marriage cases and I cannot emphasise too strongly the importance of our immigration rules concerning marriage and in particular the primary purpose rule. I see that it is Labour party policy to abolish the rule — just one of the party's pledges that would drive a coach and horses through our control and, with its other pledges, increase immigration by tens of thousands. But it is not just a question of numbers. It is ridiculous that at this of all times the Labour party should be planning to make it easy for young men —many of them like Mr. Singh with no skills and never having had a job in their lives—to enter the country by using marriage as a device. Opinions may differ on whether parents should be encouraging children to marry boys abroad who have been brought up in an entirely different way rather than their contempories in British society. But the primary purpose rule is in the general public interest and those cases do not illustrate any defect in the rule, rather the refusal of people to accept immigration requirements approved by a democratically elected Parliament. All too often a girl goes through a marriage and has a child and then the Home Office is asked to pick up the pieces when—this is certainly true in the case of Mr. Singh — anybody with a scrap of sense could have seen before the marriage that the man would not qualify to come here and would have no claim to come here.

I shall deal with the cases and first with that of Mr. Malik. On 14 January 1984 he arrived in this country and sought leave to enter as a visitor. He said that he had three months' leave from his job in Pakistan and wanted to stay with his uncle. He said that he had no plans to marry here or in Pakistan, and on the strength of what he said he was given leave to enter for three months. Within little over a month he had married Miss Kauser and was asking to stay here as a foreign husband. In saying on arrival here that he had no plans to marry he was lying quite deliberately, because what unfortunately the immigration officer did not know when he admitted Mr. Malik but what we know now was that back in 1983 the hon. Member for Preston had approached me on behalf of Miss Kauser asking how she could obtain entry for Mr. Malik to come here as her fiancé. Far from the man having no plans to marry when he arrived in Britain on 14 January, the whole arrangement for marriage had already been entered into. At the interview which followed his asking to stay as a foreign husband, he lied again and so did Miss Kauser, because they both said that they had never met or even corresponded with each other before he had arrived in this country. That was nonsense, because the truth was that before his arrival the arrangements for the marriage had proceeded to such an extent that Miss Kauser had even bought a home for them to live in. One thing was certain; Mr. Malik had entered the country by deception and his entry was therefore illegal.

When the hon. Member for Preston made representations to me on behalf of the couple I looked into the case most carefully, but it seemed to me that I could not overlook the deceit and allow Mr. Malik to stay here, without his having obtained entry clearance as the rules provide, when thousands of others were having to wait in the queue for entry clearance in the Indian sub-continent and when, to put it mildly, there were doubts as to his primary purpose in entering into the marriage.

Mr. Malik is due to be interviewed on 1 April, which is good news for him. The case will be referred to me, and I can promise him that I shall consider it with great care and examine all the circumstances, including any compassionate circumstances that he may wish to advance. If he is refused entry clearance, he will have the right to appeal to the independent appellate authorities. However, I do not think that any rational person could say what the hon. Gentleman is quoted as saying in the *Lancashire Evening Post:* that Mr. Malik has been put in an impossible position because of a ruling by me. If ever a couple were the authors of their own misfortune, it is Mr. and Mrs. Malik.

As to the case of Mr. Singh, in 1981 he applied in Delhi to come here to marry Miss Geeta. At his interview with the entry clearance officer in December 1982, Mr. Singh said that the marriage had been arranged by his uncle who knew of his desire to go abroad and better himself; and before the marriage had been arranged he had planned to go to Dubai or to Iraq to work. When asked whether the marriage had been arranged to enable him to go abroad to

work, he said yes. Miss Geeta, who was born in the United Kingdom, had not, at the time Mr. Singh applied to come, ever been to India. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, at the time of the application, she was only 16 years old.

Mr. Singh's application failed and it failed because the entry clearance officer was not satisfied either that the couple had met or that the primary purpose of the proposed marriage was not to obtain admission to the United Kingdom. But despite that clear — one might say inevitable — finding, someone, presumably the parents, arranged for this young girl barely out of school, who I am sure they expected to live in this country for the rest of her life, to go out to India and meet the man and marry him. Mr. Singh then made another application to come here for settlement, this time not as a fiancée but as a husband. Almost inevitably, that application was turned down like his first one. Mr. Singh appealed to the adjudicator, but lost, and he was refused leave to appeal to the tribunal.

That is the history thus far. What happened next was that on 3 November last year this man, who had twice applied for entry clearance and twice been turned down, turned up at Heathrow claiming entry as a visitor. His wife had by that time returned here and given birth to a child, and Mr. Singh said that he wished to persuade his wife to return to India with him. However, his wife said—this is scarcely surprising—that there was not the slightest prospect of her doing this. In considering Mr. Singh's application for leave to enter as a visitor, the immigration officer took into account all the relevant facts of the case, including the details of Mr. Singh's attempts to gain settlement in the United Kingdom. He concluded that he could not be satisfied that he was genuinely seeking entry for the period of stay as stated by him—two months. Leave to enter as a visitor was refused, but temporary admission was given while I considered representations made by the hon. Member for Preston.

I have considered the case with care, but I cannot see how the immigration officer could possibly have been wrong in his decision. It is clear that Mr. Singh's intention was not to pay a visit, but to do that which he has long wanted to do—settle in the United Kingdom. Indeed, that is now accepted by the hon. Gentleman, who is asking me to allow him to stay, not as a visitor, but permanently as a foreign husband.

To insist that Mr. Singh should be removed from this country when he has now got here may seem hard, but if ever a person was the author of his own misfortune, it is Mr. Singh. If I were to allow him to stay I would be allowing someone to stay who quite clearly does not qualify to stay under the rules approved by Parliament, and I would be allowing him to stay when he must have known perfectly well and when his wife and her family must have known perfectly well at the time of the marriage that he did not qualify to settle here. It is, therefore, a step I am not prepared to take.

It is the job of the Government to apply a control that is fair as well as firm. It certainly would not be fair to the vast majority of genuine applicants waiting abroad to be interviewed to come here if individuals like Mr. Singh were able to circumvent the control by just arriving here. At the moment there is not even an outstanding application for settlement. He is here just on temporary admission, having formally asked to come as a visitor. If he still wishes to press a claim to come here for settlement, he must go back to the Indian sub-continent and apply in the proper way.

Those seeking settlement must go through the proper procedures. It must be made plain that those who pretend to the immigration service that they are merely coming for a limited visit, and then, once in this country, seek to stay, help neither their own cases nor those of others who may be in a similar position. Being fair to others means that inevitably they must return overseas, unless there are indeed the most exceptionally compelling, compassionate circumstances. I am sorry for the girl, but I do not find any such compelling circumstances here.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 20 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Monday 24 February at Seven o'clock.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL*(By Order)*

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (CITY EXTENSION) BILL *(By Order)*

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL *(By Order)*

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 27 February.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Civil Defence

1. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to start providing regular reports to the House on how local authorities are proceeding with their civil defence requirements.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): My right hon. Friend will report to the House when the assessment of local authority plans under the 1983 regulations is complete.

Mr. Alexander: Do the reports which have already been made not show that there are profoundly disturbing weaknesses in some of our civil defence preparations and that the 1983 regulations are widely ignored and flouted? On concluding the assessment, will my hon. Friend consider appointing a civil defence inspector with powers to monitor and direct civil defence regulations?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. There has been, as we expected, a variable response to the questionnaires. We must examine carefully the plans of the 54 county level authorities. My hon. Friend is correct in saying that this will require a lot of follow-up and advice. The civil defence adviser is fully engaged on this task.

Mr. D. E. Thomas: When the Home Secretary reports to the House, will he take care to report on the extraordinary events in the Camarthen district where, apparently, a security firm which has been grant-aided by his Department used dogs and violence against members of the civilian population?

Mr. Shaw: I am aware of that unfortunate incident. I understand that an inquiry is taking place. The hon. Gentleman will, of course, receive a report in due course on the incident.

Sir John Farr: Is my hon. Friend aware that some local authorities—nearly all of them Labour—seem to think that civil defence begins and ends by erecting a notice on the speed limit sign saying, "Nuclear Free Zone"? Will my hon. Friend point out to them the error of their ways? Will he take the opportunity to point out to the ratepayers what some of these Labour-controlled city councillor are doing?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. There is plenty of advertising of that myth. No doubt those local authorities will be the first to close the radiology departments in their hospitals if they pursue that policy.

Crime Prevention

2. **Mr. Maclean** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the outcome of the recent seminar on crime prevention.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The seminar agreed on a range of initiatives by industry, commerce and the Government. These cover four areas—autocrime, residential burglary, aspects of violent crime and crime in the workplace. I will chair a follow-up seminar in the summer to take stock of progress. I believe that there is huge scope for local schemes of many different kinds of crime prevention, and we are working hard to encourage these.

Mr.Maclean: I am obliged to my right hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that, for this vital area of Government activity to succeed, it must involve not only Home Office Ministers and boffins but the whole community? What steps is he taking to get across the message that we must involve insurance companies, motor manufacturers, builders, and so on as well as small community groups, in this vital aspect of crime prevention?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. That was the main purpose of the seminar. We shall push that message through. My hon. Friend will be glad to know that the magpie television advertisements, which we showed some time ago, were followed in London and the midlands

where they were shown by an 11 per cent. decrease in burglaries in the following quarter. We are extending that programme to the north.

Mr. Roy Hughes: I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to early-day motion 468 concerning the case of Peter William Jones, who yesterday in Newport Crown court received a life sentence. Does the right hon. Gentleman appreciate that many people in Newport and elsewhere cannot understand why a man with such a record of violence was allowed to roam the streets and eventually to rape a seven-year-old girl? Will the right hon. Gentleman call for an early review of sentencing and appeal procedures?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman knows that I cannot, and do not intend to, comment on sentences passed in court by the independent judiciary. I shall look into any aspects of the case which fall within my responsibility.

Mr. Sackville: In view of the clear evidence that shows that a vast proportion of crime is preventable by the public, I welcome the fact that one of the five local crime prevention projects is to be in Bolton. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the lessons learnt there will be used to the benefit of the rest of the country and that adequate resources will be provided?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. I entirely agree. I was in Bolton not long ago, as my hon. Friend knows. I found considerable interest and enthusiasm in the fact that Bolton had been chosen for that pioneering project. I hope that all involved in Bolton, whatever their party political opinions, will join in that effort for the protection of the public.

Mr. Evans: Does the Home Secretary accept that the best way to cut the appalling level of crime is to cut the appalling level of unemployment? Does he accept that one way of cutting the appalling level of unemployment is to accept the programme put forward by the Employment Select Committee, which would immediately take 750,000 people out of the dole queue?

Mr. Hurd: I do not accept that, because 95 per cent. of the crime committed is crime against property. A large percentage of that is opportunist—not prepared long in advance. Crime prevention could substantially cut those figures if it were better applied.

Mr. Stokes: As so much crime is involved with motor cars, will my right hon. Friend consider bringing in regulations to ensure that in future all British car manufacturers produce cars with burglar-proof locks?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, indeed. My hon. Friend is on to an excellent point. One of the results of the seminar at 10 Downing street was an agreement that a British standard for car security would be prepared by the British Standards Institution.

Mr. Kaufman: Will the Home Secretary arrange to have published the letter which the Prime Minister's office has sent to all the participants in the so-called crime seminar last month, from which it will be plain to anyone who reads it that the Government are taking not one firm action and are spending not one penny of new money on crime prevention? That curious event at Downing street was less a seminar than an episode from "Spitting Image". Will the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister now abandon those publicity stunts and gimmicks and do something positive and tangible to deal with the record crime wave over which they are presiding?

Mr. Hurd: I am amazed that the right hon. Gentleman should make that mistake. Does he realise how many people in Manchester and everywhere else suffer from opportunist crime which can be prevented? The general secretary of the Trade Union Congress, Mr. Norman Willis, was at the seminar. He spoke to us warmly of the way in which we should try to enlist general support for crime prevention. That was the purpose of the seminar, and it is the purpose of the letter to which the right hon. Gentleman referred.

Football Matches (Private Boxes)

3. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the incidence of drink-related disorderly behaviour in private boxes at football matches.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has received representations from a number of right hon. and hon. Members, and others, to the effect that the controls on the sale and possession of alcohol in executive boxes should be relaxed. As he said in his statement to the House on the Popplewell report, we are awaiting further information on the financial aspects from the football authorities. We shall report our conclusions to the House while the Public Order Bill is before Parliament.

Mr. Taylor: Will my hon. Friend accept that I have attended such boxes from time to time? I have never witnessed any violence, fighting or rioting. If indeed the incidence of such disorder is nil, and if the prospect of such disorder is nil, what is his alcohol prohibition guarding against?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. There is no implication that hooliganism starts in executive boxes. We recognise that these are a salubrious part of most grounds, but my hon. Friend must realise that the alcohol legislation we put through last summer was designed to impose a number of restraints affecting all persons attending football matches. We are now awaiting an assessment by the clubs of the losses that they may have incurred by virtue of the restraints on executive boxes. That is the matter we shall now deal with.

Mr. Allan Roberts: If Labour voters outside the executive boxes, looking in through the glass screens, could see Conservative voters drinking champagne when those outside were prevented from buying cans and bottles of ale in the ground, would that scenario not cause some anger among some of the football supporters?

Mr. Shaw: I have no doubt that it might. I think that the hon. Gentleman should have a word with the chairman of Liverpool football club to see whether he follows the same line of argument.

Mr. Hicks: Does my hon. Friend not agree now, as some of us tried to point out on Second Reading, that this total ban is having an adverse effect, particularly on the smaller football clubs? Therefore, will he look again, as quickly as possible, at that problem, specifically in the case of those smaller clubs which have an excellent record of crowd control and non-violence?

Mr. Shaw: I fully understand my hon. Friend's point of view, and that is why my right hon. Friend made it clear that we would be prepared to review it during the passage of the Public Order Bill. I must remind my hon. Friend and the House that in the discussions which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, who has responsibility for sport, and I have with the football authorities, it is essential to know the scale of the problem with which they are currently faced so that we can make a proper assessment.

Mr. Frank Cook: Do not the protestations coming from the Government Benches give a clear example of the standard attitude of the Government? They want to lay down the law for the masses but then claim a personal exemption for themselves.

Mr. Shaw: No, that is far from the truth, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will understand that it is not true. We are concerned about the equity in the legislation and the extent to which clubs, large and small, may be put at risk. That could occur in Middlesborough and Hartlepool, just as much as in Liverpool or at Everton.

Voluntary Bodies (Funding)

4. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received from voluntary bodies funded by his Department concerning their future funding.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): Representations have beeen received from the National Association of Victim Support schemes, the National Marriage Guidance Council, Community Transport, the United Kingdom Immigrants Advisory Service, the British Refugee Council, the Apex Trust, New Bridge and several local organisations concerned with the after-care of offenders.

Two experimental overnight shelters for alcoholics whose Home Office funding was always planned to end this year — St. Anne's shelter, Leeds and the Birmingham wet shelter — have also made representations.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that the development of genuine collaboration between voluntary bodies and statutory authorities depends on a consistency of funding? Will the Minister accept that the problem which local authorities have faced with rate-capping penalties plus the abolition of the metropolitan counties has harmed that collaboration? Will the Minister accept, given the long list of bodies he has mentioned, that there is a great need for his Department to look at the consistency of funding at least to get them over the hump of the abolition of the metropolitan counties?

Mr. Waddington: I cannot agree with what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question. On the matter of abolition, the Government, as the hon. Gentleman knows, have taken a number of measures to help London boroughs and metropolitan districts to continue funding worthwhile voluntary bodies. Grant-related expenditure assessments have taken account of the new responsibilities of boroughs and districts. There is new statutory machinery to facilitate collective grant-giving, and there is the additional financial support for inherited local projects.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my hon. and Learned Friend agree that if the Government were to enlarge the scope for donations to charities to be made deductible against income tax and corporation tax, one of the advantages would be that the organisations would be funded more in proportion to the direct public support that they can enlist than at present, and, to that extent, questions about their future funding would be taken out of the political sphere?

Mr. Waddington: I hear what my hon. Friend says, but it goes wide of the question and is not a matter for me.

Mr. Corbett: Does the Minister accept that, despite the recent welcome increase in funding for the victim support schemes, at local level many worthwhile schemes are grossly under-funded? Does he share the view, which is widely held in the House, that far too small a proportion of the total law and order budget is directed at victims?

Mr. Waddington: This year's grant for the National Association of Victim Support schemes is more than double the grant made last year, and next year it is intended for the first time to provide grants to some local schemes which have particular financial difficulties. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that that is real help from the Government.

Mrs. Currie: Is my hon. Friend aware that Turning Point, the drugs and alcohol rehabilitation charity which runs services in Derby, Birmingham and elsewhere, has been trying extremely hard to raise private funding for its work but has been finding it extremely difficult because businesses consider that they have already paid through taxation? Will he, therefore, take seriously the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), and urge his colleagues in the Cabinet and elsewhere to realise that if we can create an "American regime", in which taxation is set against charitable donations, we can help such bodies?

Mr. Waddington: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will no doubt note all that my hon. Friend has said.

Crime Prevention

5. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further initiatives he intends to take to combat the continuing escalation in the crime rate.

8. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on progress in reducing violent crime.

Mr. Hurd: Recorded crime has been steadily increasing for 30 years. Our strategy for fighting crime is practical and realistic. Despite the misguided indignation of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), we shall pursue vigorously the proposals arising from the Prime Minister's crime prevention seminar. A major initiative to deploy the unemployed on crime prevention work in the community programme is to be undertaken. We shall continue to provide the police with the resources and powers to help them in their task, and the courts with adequate powers to deal with offenders.

Mr. Hamilton: As violent crime has increased by more than 60 per cent. since the Government took power in

1979, does the Secretary of State not regret the way in which the Conservative party deceived the electorate at the 1979 and 1983 elections by pretending that these problems have simple solutions? Does he accept with more importance than hitherto that the social causes of crime are real? The deprivation caused by a crumbling housing stock and the massive increase in unemployment are important factors. Does he recognise that unless and until the Government realise those hard facts the figures will continue to escalate?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are no simple answers to crime. We alone among the parties in the House have a practical and realistic strategy for dealing with it. The hon. Gentleman knows that there is endless argument and debate about the root causes of crime. We in the Home Office must deal with the impact of crime by strengthening the police and ensuring that they have the right powers. I agree that at the same time we need to tackle social problems, especially in our inner cities, and we are doing that.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, whatever theoretical research may purport to show, common sense suggests that people are influenced by what they see on television? If young people in particular are subjected to a constant diet of violent television programmes, there is likely to be an increase in the amount of violent behaviour.

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my hon. Friend. Common sense points us in that direction, and that is why I am anxious that the broadcasting authorities should exert themselves at all times to ensure that the guidelines, which exist and which are known and admirable, are fully respected.

Mr. Dixon: Does the Secretary of State recall that I wrote to him last September about a 15-year-old constituent of mine who went into a shop and bought a lethal crossbow? His hon. Friend the Minister of State answered the letter saying that it was an important matter that they would keep under review. Has anything been done about that incident? Do the Government intend to introduce legislation to prohibit the sale of crossbows or at least to extend licensing, bearing in mind recent incidents?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman knows from the letter that he received from my hon. Friend the difficulties in this matter. He is right about the public concern. We are considering the matter carefully and urgently to see whether anything sensible can be done.

Mr. Conway: Will my right hon. Friend give consideration to increasing the establishment for special constables? Is he aware of their important contributon at no charge to the community, in giving their time to patrolling areas in Shrewsbury to great effect and doing a great deal to support the regular police force?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has made a good point. The number of special constables is increasing. I am in touch with the chief constables and the commission about the matter.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Home Secretary confirm that last year the number of crimes was 3·5 million—an increase of 1 million since the Government took office—and that last year 2·5 million of those crimes were not cleared up? Is it true that the Government do not have a strategy for catching criminals or for preventing crime?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman, who is a fair debater, does himself no credit with the implication that crime started to rise in 1979. That is an absurd proposition. Crime has been rising at a steady rate for 30 years.

Civil Defence

6. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider endowing a chair for civil defence in a British university.

Mr. Shaw: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Jessel: Civil defence could save many lives. Should we not study the facts with great care to show up the sheer irresponsibility of the variable response to which my hon. Friend referred a quarter of an hour ago?

Mr. Shaw: I accept my hon. Friend's point. It is a serious subject worthy of proper research. We have allocated about £1 million out of the civil defence budget for research projects into civil defence, which will achieve, I trust, the objectives that my hon. Friend seeks.

Mr. Haynes: I do not agree with the question, but I agree with the answer. Will the Minister have a word with his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to consider at the next Cabinet meeting the creation of a chair in unemployment in the universities of Britain for unemployment and appoint a professor or the noble Lord Young to sit in it?

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his sterling contribution. It is not a chair that we need, but more job opportunities.

Thames Valley Police

7. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he will use in considering the possibility of approving a further increase in the authorised establishment of the Thames Valley police.

Mr. Shaw: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will consider that matter in the autumn on the basis of the demonstrated needs of the Thames Valley police and other forces at that time and in the light of further advice from Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary.

Before the recent increase of 50 posts, 320 additional posts had already been approved for Thames Valley since May 1979, which was more than for any other provincial force.

Mr. MacKay: Is my hon. Friend aware that there are high hopes that extra provision will be made available by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the autumn? The principal criterion that should be considered is that despite the extra 50 police officers that have ben allocated this year, Thames Valley has the worst ratio of police to population of any force in the country. Our county councils are happy to fund their part of the extra cost.

Mr. Shaw: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. He is right in saying that the Thames Valley police force has a low police-to-population ratio. There are other significant factors that we must take into account,

including the effectiveness and efficiency of the force and progress on civilianisation and crime statistics. I assure him that a thorough review will be undertaken.

Mr. Soley: Does the Minister accept that having more police officers does not necessary lead to more police officers on the beat? As the public rightly want community policing, will he take up the Labour party's suggestion to enter into negotiations with the Police Federation to make a community police officer's job part of a career structure, which is suitably remunerated?

Mr. Shaw: I do not think that on reflection the hon. Gentleman will expect me to welcome that suggestion. However, he will expect me to welcome the fact that the police service has shown itself to be capable of tackling the task with which it is faced. We expect the development of community officers and beat officers to be an important part of that progress.

Mr. Watts: Is my hon. Friend aware that the Thames Valley police force is anxious to develop community policing? If our application for an additional 200 officers had been approved, that is how the resources would have been used. When the force needs 753 additional officers to bring it up to the average complement of forces outside London, an allocation of 50 out of an application for 200 is very meagre and disappointing.

Mr. Shaw: I recognise my hon. Friend's disappointment, but he must understand that my right hon. Friend must assess all needs and all priorities in the review of provincial forces. That is what we propose to do.

Metropolitan Police

10. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on current manning levels within the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Hurd: The strength of the Metropolitan police at the end of January was 26,870, the highest ever. The strength of the civil staff was 13,168. Total strength, including both police and civil staff, was 6,031 higher than in May 1979. Recruitment is going well, and the Commissioner plans to reach the present establishment of 27,165 by next June.

An increase of 43 in the civil staff ceiling from 1 April has already been approved, and I have also given my agreement in principle to an increase of 50 in the police establishment from the same date to strengthen the Commissioner's efforts against drug trafficking. Last October I set in hand urgent work to consider where there were specific needs for further increases in the force establishment. I am now considering the outcome of this review.

Mr. Evennett: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his answer. I think that all Conservative Members are grateful to the Government for their efforts to improve police morale and manpower. However, is he aware that in my district, which covers Bexley, there appears to be undermanning and that in parts of Erith, Belvedere and Thamesmead this is hindering the fight against crime because we do not appear to have enough manpower?

Mr. Hurd: I understand that point, but I am a little puzzled by my hon. Friend's question, because my information is that there has been an increase of about 10 in the strength of the Bexley Heath division over last year's figure. I shall look further into that point with the Commissioner. However, after a pause, the size of the Metropolitan police is set to rise further.

Mr. Chris Smith: What guarantee is there that the additional police resources that are being made available to the Metropolian police will result in more police officers on the beat in local neighbourhoods, with less extended beats to patrol, instead of racing around in Transit vans, with the constant possibility that there might conceivably be a repetition of the tragic incidents at Holloway in August 1982?

Mr. Hurd: It is for the Commissioner to decide how to use the resources that are available to him. He has to strike a balance between the men on the beat and being able to make men available at short notice when there is trouble. The tendency is towards men on the beat. The House may know that the reorganisation that the Commissioner has set in hand will release for operational duty about 200 police officers over and above the figures that I gave in the main answer.

Mr. Squire: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the Commissioner of Police, who is much respected, has specifically asked for an increase in establishment? Will he undertake to give the very strongest consideration to meeting that request? Many parts of the Metropolitan police area, including mine in east London, would appreciate an increase in establishment.

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that that is so. That is why, since last October, we have been conducting a review, which is now coming to an end. I have received the results, but I have not yet had time to study them. It will not be long, however, before we can reach a decision.

Mr. Woodall: Is the Home Secretary aware that his reply may be good news for London, but that it is not such good news for other metropolitan police forces? Is he aware that the budget of the new police committee that is to take over the West Yorkshire metropolitan police at the end of next month is already £6 million short for the current year? Will the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for the Environment get their act together, because there has been an increase in crime in Yorkshire as well as in London? The new police committee will find itself in extreme difficulty in keeping present manpower levels, never mind increasing them. What will the Home Secretary do about it?

Mr. Hurd: It is precisely because the new joint boards, including West Yorkshire, came to see me and pointed out the difficulty which the hon. Member has raised that I was able to persuade my colleagues and to announce last week an increase of 51 per cent., from 50 per cent., in the proportion of the police grant borne by the taxpayer. That will be a substantial help to West Yorkshire and the other metropolitan areas in keeping their police forces up to establishment.

Mr. Stanbrook: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the gentle rise in the establishment of the Metropolitan police over the last 30 or 40 years is inadequate to cope with all the extra demands made upon the police and that, despite the increase in the number of civilian staff, we still have far too few people to provide adequate policing on the beat?

Mr. Hurd: It is certainly true that the demands on the police have risen and that the conditions of service have

changed. The cost of a trained police officer, which is about £28,000 a year, has also risen. That is why I am considering again in the review that is coming to an end the right level for the Metropolitan police.

Mr. Kaufman: On the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), does the Home Secretary agree that there is a grave danger that unless the men responsible for the wanton crime against my hon. Friend's constituents are discovered and dealt with, there will be increasing public anxiety and the good name of the Metropolitan police will be sullied? What will the Home Secretary do to make it clear that men who shield criminals within the Metropolitan police collude in the crime? Will he establish whether it is appropriate for such men to remain members of the force unless they assist to discover the people who committed the crime?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the right hon. Gentleman and with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) that that affair is deeply damaging to the Metropolitan police and will continue to be so unless and until it is cleared up. In other cases, the right hon. Gentleman would have been very quick to point out to me that what is at stake is evidence and that the burden of proof has to be proof beyond reasonable doubt, whether one is talking about disciplinary action, as I think he was just now, or about a criminal charge. The burden of proof is the same, because the rights of police officers in that respect are exactly the same—no less, no more—as those of any other citizen. That is the problem. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the Metropolitan Commissioner has made it clear that if fresh evidence comes to light on the incident that evidence will fall to be investigated.

Drink-drive Defendants (Detention)

11. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek to restrict the power of magistrates to order the detention of drink-drive defendants in police cells for up to five days; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): We have been considering the possibility of repealing the power in the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 under which detention in police cells may be ordered for up to four days, and will announce our conclusion before long.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is a lot of concern following newspaper reports about the failure to continue to give magistrates power immediately to imprison in police cells those convicted of drink-driving offences?

Is he aware that there is anxiety that magistrates will be denied the important deterrent of putting these people immediately in prison for up to five days? As more than 1,000 people lose their lives each year through drink-driving-related offences, will my hon. Friend reconsider the suggestion, because we must deter people from drinking and driving?

Mr. Mellor: Of course we must deter people from drinking and driving. The penalty for driving while over the limit is six months' imprisonment. That is not the issue at stake here. The issue is whether policemen who are there to investigate offences should be used as gaolers when we have a prison system to carry out that function.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister consider reducing the blood-alcohol level at which drivers are banned?

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is reviewing road traffic law, and no doubt he will consider that matter.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind, when considering this serious matter, that any action taken by the Government must not be construed as going soft on the drinking driver, since that is one of the most dangerous and irresponsible things that an individual can do?

Mr. Mellor: There is no question of going soft on drinking and driving. We made it plain in a carefully thought-out advertising campaign how anti-social and dangerous it is to drive while under the influence of alcohol, and we made it clear that powers are available to the courts to deal with the offence. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), the issue is whether it should be appropriate for the courts to sentence people to remain in police cells rather than to imprisonment. That is a different matter from that which has been raised in supplementary questions.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

12. **Mr. Madel** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many neighbourhood watch schemes were in operation on the latest convenient date; how this compares with 12 months earlier; and what is the breakdown between the Metropolitan police area and provincial forces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In January 1986, 9,257 neighbourhood watch schemes were operating in England and Wales, more than double the number in existence a year earlier. The number of schemes operating in the Metropolitan police district is now 3,770.

Mr. Madel: If this welcome new development continues, is my hon. Friend confident that the number of burglaries will decrease considerably?

Mr. Shaw: We have evidence that, as a result of neighbourhood watch and other schemes, there has been a decline in the number of burglaries. The national trend for the first few months of 1985 was down. However, it is essential to maintain a range of activities if we are to reduce the scale of crime.

Mr. Skinner: Has the Minister received any applications for a neighbourhood watch scheme to be initiated in the City of London, where, apparently, the Government give a nod and a wink to swindling on a great scale? Could we have a neighbourhood watch scheme in Whitehall, which could watch the Government doctoring minutes and the Department fiddling unemployment figures? A man on the bus this morning said to me, "Marcos in the Phillipines has nothing on the Government when it comes to fiddling figures."

Mr. Shaw: It is good to have the fiddler back on the roof again. If there is a requirement to set up a neighbourhood watch scheme in the City of London, for the benefit of the residents, to deal with opportunist crime, we shall be pleased to consider it.

Mr. Stern: Does my hon. Friend agree that the figures he has announced will be welcomed by all those who are seriously interested in reducing crime? As a number of schemes have been in operation for comparatively lengthy periods in many areas, including my constituency, will he consider whether it would be appropriate to arrange a national conference of representatives of some of the schemes so that experiences can be compared?

Mr. Shaw: I remind my hon. Friend that there was a national conference on crime prevention not long ago. I shall consider what he has suggested in relation to the standing conference on crime prevention, which will meet later this year.

Mr. Evans: Is planning permission required for the erection of crime watch notices on lamp posts and walls?

Mr. Shaw: I understand that advertisement regulations require planning permission for the erection of such notices. I trust that all local authorities will give it.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Welcome though the neighbourhood watch scheme is, is my hon. Friend aware that the number of burglaries increased from 643,000 in 1980 to 897,000 in 1984? Does he accept that it is about time we took some tougher measures of the sort that the public cannot expect the Opposition parties to introduce? Instead, the public look to the Conservative party to bring forward such measures. Does my hon. Friend agree that they should include corporal punishment and the withdrawal of driving licences, and even of social security benefit?

Mr. Shaw: I remind my hon. Friend that there was a decline in the number of burglaries in the first nine months of 1985. I think that my hon. Friend quoted the recorded crime figure, which is a different matter. I agree with him that the Government have shown the way in which to deal with crime by introducing a range of effective deterrents that are designed to combat crime and criminal activity generally.

Crime Survey

14. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department is currently undertaking any studies into the effects of the fear of crime.

Mr. Mellor: The British crime survey, conducted by the research and planning unit, collected a great deal of information on fear of crime and its effects. Findings on fear have been published in three reports in the Home Office research series, and two further studies are in progress.

Mr. Cohen: The Minister has referred already to the recent public relations seminar, in which the Prime Minister talked about crime prevention. How much money will the Government provide for crime prevention, especially to local authorities, which want to get on with the job of tackling the ill-lit, vandalised and run-down areas where crime breeds?

Mr. Mellor: The hon. Gentleman has a long and somewhat selective memory. He might care to reflect on the dramatically increased resources given to the police, which mean that they are back on the beat and organising neighbourhood watch schemes, whereas under Labour Governments they were compelled to drive around in panda cars because there were not enough of them.

Nuclear Attack (Casualty Figures)

15. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions the Government have had with the British Medical Association on the assumptions for any estimate of casualties in the event of nuclear attack; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None, Sir.

Mr. Strang: Does the Minister recall the dispute some years ago between the Government and the British Medical Association following the publication of the report on the effects of nuclear war? Do the Government agree with the BMA, or have they abandoned any attempt to estimate the length of survival, given certain assumptions in a nuclear war?

Mr. Shaw: The hon. Member will recall that the Government do not make detailed estimates of casualties, which would depend on the strategic intention of the enemy and other factors that cannot be predicted.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a reception to mark the 75th anniversary of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

Mr. Fisher: When did the Prime Minister first know of the deadline of 4 March?

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to what I have already said on this matter.

Mr. Hanley: Is my right hon. Friend aware that British companies made acquisitions to the tune of some £4 billion in the United States last year, and therefore acquisitions in the United Kingdom by United States companies is by no means a one-way street?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I saw a detailed account in a paper today of inward and outward investment, and of American investment in this country. The figures published in the *Financial Times* show that British companies acquired 160 businesses in the United States last year and 142 in 1984. I hope that the British acquisition of businesses in the United States was welcomed in that country.

Mr. Kinnock: What specific assurances are being sought from potential purchasers of the constituent parts of British Leyland? What means will the right hon. Lady adopt to ensure that such assurances are enforced in practice?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry spoke about some of the assurances that were being sought, in his statement yesterday. The assurances are, for example, that the British nature of Land Rover and Range Rover in particular should be honoured, and that there should be certain assurances on sourcing.

Mr. Kinnock: How can the Prime Minister convince herself that honour is equivalent to binding assurances that will determine the future of an essential part of the British motor industry? What did the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry mean in the other place yesterday when he said about such assurances:

"with regard to British content, trade marks, names and the like . . . there is a time limitation".—[*Official Report, House of Lords;* 19 February 1986, Volume 471, c. 634.]

The Prime Minister: We believe that we are seeking the best future for Land Rover, Freight Rover and the whole of British Leyland. We are seeking the best future for jobs through the extension of trade and business. My noble Friend was clear in what he said to the other place, and I do not understand why the right hon. Gentleman finds difficulty with it.

Mr. Kinnock: Does the best future, as defined by the right hon. Lady, include binding enforceable assurances?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman must see how long enforceable assurances can be instituted. He must then get legal advice upon that. That is precisely what my noble Friend was saying. I make it clear that there is no binding enforceable assurance about the future of a loss-making British Leyland.

Mr. Richard Page: As it was known by Members of this House and by the trade unions that discussions between General Motors and British Leyland were taking place months before Christmas, would my right hon. Friend like to comment on the fact that either the Opposition are ill-informed, or they have waited for the right moment to make political capital and are not worried about the workers in British Leyland?

The Prime Minister: We are anxious to secure a good future for British Leyland. Taxpayers have already put into British Leyland some £2·2 billion and have guaranteed a further £1·6 billion. That means that every family in the United Kingdom has contributed £200 to British Leyland. That situation cannot continue.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Does the Prime Minister realise that hundreds of thousands of her fellow citizens whom she regards as no less British than her own constituents in London are looking to her to defend with courage and visibility their rights and their status?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware that I am to see leaders of the Unionist parties next week, and the SDLP after that. I hope and believe that people who are completely Unionist in Northern Ireland will accept the decisions of this House.

Mr. Hickmet: Will my right hon. Friend comment upon Anglo-Turkish relations following the visit of the Turkish Prime Minister? Does she agree that Turkey is progressing satisfactorily towards a restoration of full political and human rights? Does she further agree that Turkey is committed to a just and fair solution for both communities in Cyprus?

The Prime Minister: We had very good talks with the Turkish Prime Minister. He is taking enormous strides towards inproving human rights in Turkey. We discussed briefly the situation in Cyprus and we both hope that both parts of Cyprus, which is a present artificially partitioned —I hope not permanently—will co-operate with Mr. Perez de Cuellar in seeking a satisfactory future for Cyprus as a unitary, although federal, state.

Dr. Owen: Will the Prime Minister now take action about the distressing case of the teachers' dispute? Will she accept that, although the Education Bill published today contains many worthwhile things, the Government nevertheless expected to build on the ACAS proposal in England and Wales and produce a quantified offer for Scotland?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, processes under ACAS are continuing with the unions which are party to that agreement. A decision about the attitude of the NUT will have to be taken by the NUT. We will know more in a few days' time. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will welome the Education Bill and the increased powers that it gives to parents in school governorship.

Mr. Gale: After reflecting on the talks that she had with the Turkish Prime Minister, can my right hon. Friend tell us when the property stolen by the Turkish army of occupation in northern Cyprus will be returned to my constituents who own it?

The Prime Minister: I am not able to give my hon. Friend the information that he seeks. We shall, of course, take up any specific case.

Q2. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Many of us who have expressed anxiety about increasing American involvement in British industry are not motivated by anti-American sentiment. We are simply deeply worried about what is happening to British Leyland, to Westland and to large parts of our computer industry. What is happening will inexorably ensure that crucial decisions about the character and development of British industry are be made in the United States. Will the Prime Minister sit back and let that happen?

The Prime Minister: Britain invests abroad and British companies go abroad on a very considerable scale. When they invest in the United States—ICI has made a considerable investment in Beatrice Chemicals, amounting to about £700 million—I believe that they are welcome and that there is no anti-British feeling there. I fear that some anti-American feeling has been aroused. I fear that some has been aroused deliberately about the future of British Leyland. All bids are being considered, but we are concerned about the future of the whole of British Leyland and trying to get it privatised.

Q3. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hannam: Has my right hon. Friend taken notice of the Vickers employee consortium proposals for the buy-out of the shipyards at Barrow and Birkenhead? Is she further aware of the local communities' involvement in the proposals? In view of the success of the National Freight Corporation workers' buy-out, will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is still the Government's policy to encourage the wider ownership of British industry?

The Prime Minister: The answer is yes—to further privatisation and to the encouragement of wider ownership. We shall, of course, consider that bid along with all of the others for that shipyard.

Mr. MacKenzie: Is the Prime Minister aware that we have just heard the figures that she gave for taxpayers' assistance to British Leyland? Is she aware that some of us cannot for the life of us understand why the Swedes, the Japanese, the Germans, the Italians and the French — indeed all our competitors — give much more assistance to their motor car industries than we do to ours? We cannot understand why Britain will not help its motor car industry as do our competitors.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that other countries are giving more assistance than has been given to British Leyland. I stress once again that taxpayers' grants and guarantees amount to every family giving £200 in assistance to British Leyland and, alas, British Leyland is still in a loss-making condition.

Q4. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Winterton: Will my right hon. Friend assure those of us who openly and honourably disagree from time to time with Government policy, but do not question her courageous leadership or her determination to restore the economic and political power of the United Kingdom, that she will continue to respond robustly to the hypocritical, irresponsible, carping cant of the Opposition parties and lead the Conservatives into a third successful general election?

The Prime Minister: Yes, on the same excellent policies that secured the first two victories.

Mr. Skinner: Now that the Prime Minister, as she showed in a recent broadcast, has become deeply concerned about the low-paid and levels of taxation, will she take the necessary steps to abolish the poll tax? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is the first opportunity that the hon. Gentleman has had to ask a question of the Prime Minister today.

Mr. Skinner: Is she aware that the poll tax means that the poor will pay for the rich? Is she further aware that a wealthy couple can buy a £500,000 house in Dulwich and be relieved of paying £3,000 in rates in exchange for a few hundred pounds in poll tax, and that pensioners will have to pick up the bill? Why does she not put her money where her mouth is?

The Prime Minister: There is not a poll tax. What we have proposed is a community charge, which would be rebated. I note that the hon. Gentleman supports a system under which many people pay nothing to local rates but put up public expenditure. We would not approve such a system. I note that the hon. Gentleman wants a system which would go in for a rating revaluation, and all the injustice that that would mean.

Q5. **Mr. Temple-Morris** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Is my right hon. Friend not seriously concerned at the escalation of fighting in the Persian Gulf and, not least, the reported shooting down of an Iranian civil airliner by Iraqi jets this morning? In connection with all this, will my right hon. Friend confirm that we are not supplying arms or military equipment to Iran, or, for that matter, to Iraq? Will she do her utmost, in conjunction with our allies, to limit, if not finish, this fighting and this unfortunate war?

The Prime Minister: I am aware of that tragic incident this morning, but I have nothing further to report about it. We do not know anything more about the passengers who were on board. We do everything possible in connection with any reconciliation or any mediation in the Iran-Iraq war. There is no shortage of efforts. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find a solution. We do not supply equipment which would exacerbate the conflict, and we will do everything possible to try to bring it to an end.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: Given the reaction to the so-called Anglo-Irish agreement in the Province, the boycotting and non-co-operation that is taking place in the Province, the reports last night of disaffection in the RUC, the newspaper reports — but newspaper reports only — of calls from an elected representative to take over the Parliament building at Stormont, leading to UDI, and the report of an Ulster workers' strike on 3 March, should not the Government make a statement on this? The discussion is takng place elswhere but not here, and we have not even had a report on the Prime Minister's meeting with the Taoiseach yesterday. There are five private notice questions in the Dail. It matters to us here as well as to the people in the south of Ireland.

The Prime Minister: The Taoiseach and I discussed the Anglo, or United Kingdom-Irish agreement yesterday. We pointed out that we both believed that it must be implemented. We shall do all in our power to implement it. We shall do everything that we can to reassure Unionist opinion and to have structures for consultation with them. We hope that the SDLP will soon honour its commitment to enter into talks about devolution, which, of course, would put much more power into a devolved Assembly, and much less to the Intergovernmental Conference. We also hope for increased security co-operation across the border. We welcome very much the decision of the Taoiseach to sign the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 24 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the second report of the Select Committee on Social Services in Session 1983-84 on children in care (House of Commons Paper 360) and the Government's response (Cmnd. 9298). The debate will arise on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motions on the Bishops' (Retirement) Measure and the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure.

Proceedings on the Agricultural Holdings Bill *[Lords]*, which is a consolidation Measure.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

TUESDAY 25 FEBRUARY — Motion on the Local Government Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order.

Motion relating to the Local Government Reorganisation (Designated Councils) (Pensions) Order.

WEDNESDAY 26 FEBRUARY—There will be a debate on the Royal Air Force on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motion on the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order.

THURSDAY 27 FEBRUARY—Until about seven o'clock there will be a debate on motions relating to recommendations in the second, third and fourth reports of the Select Committee on Procedure of Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Papers Nos. 49, 396 and 623) and the first report of the Select Committee on Procedure of this Session (House of Commons Paper No. 42).

Remaining stages of the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY—Private Members' Motions.

MONDAY 3 MARCH—Opposition Day (9th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, the subject for debate to be announced.

It is expected that the Chairman of Ways and Means will name opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. On British Leyland, is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, on Tuesday night, the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry said:

"the House was sovereign; the House has total and complete control over what happens"?—[*Official Report*, 18 February 1986; Vol. 92, col. 291.]

However, yesterday afternoon, in the other place, the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry said that the decision relating to BL would merely be "reported to Parliament". Will the right hon. Gentleman give a clear guarantee that the House will have an opportunity to debate the whole issue before any deal is struck?

Yesterday, the Paymaster General was caught out trying to slip a policy change through by the back door by means of a written answer. Later today, he will have to make a statement about fiddling the unemployment figures. When will the right hon. Gentleman allocate Government time for a full-scale debate on unemployment, including the proposals recently put forward by the Select Committee on Employment, which has a special regard for the problems of the long-term unemployed?

Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that there will be a debate on Welsh affairs as soon as possible?

Mr. Biffen: In the debate on 18 February, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, referring to parliamentary consideration of any deal that might be concluded concerning British Leyland, said:

"When a conclusion to negotiations is reached my right hon. Friend will immediately make a statement to the House and he will accept that it will be for the House to debate and decide upon the result of those negotiations." — [*Official Report*, 18 February 1986; Vol. 92, column 291.]

I am happy to endorse my hon. Friend's remarks.

As to the preparation of statistically more accurate unemployment figures, I am sorry that the rather emotive language which the Leader of the Opposition has a disposition to use has crept into his remarks this afternoon. I assure him that we attach great importance to this topic. The matter of a debate will be considered through the usual channels. Obviously, it would be appropriate for a Government response to the findings of the Select Committee on Employment to be tabled.

Finally, in the calmer waters of Welsh business, we very much look forward to an early debate on Welsh affairs.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): My right hon. Friend will be aware that clause 2 of the Shops Bill was considerably amended in another place. In view of the widespread interest in the outcome and contents of the Bill, will my right hon. Friend arrange for a Government statement to be made early next week on whether that amendment will be accepted?

Mr. Biffen: Of course, I shall refer that request to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be interested to know that, in the reasonably near future, the House will have the opportunity to consider the Second Reading of that legislation.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Will Conservative Members be given the opportunity of a free vote on the Shops Bill on Second Reading? Next week, when the report of the Select Committee on Procedure is discussed, will the timetabling of Government Bills be a matter for a free vote as well?

Mr. Biffen: Ever ambitious as I am to take responsibility in all these matters, I must say that this matter is for my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, just as in 1979, when a rapid rise in oil prices led to a speculative build-up of reserves which worsened the impending glut in the oil market, so now, would not a rapid fall in oil prices, resulting in the ceasing of exploration, cause great damage in future years? As Great Britain has an influence on the oil market far out of proportion to its oil production, could we not play a critical role in ensuring that the market does not get out of control? Should we not debate this vital issue?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand that this is not the appropriate forum for me to engage in economic examination. However, I assure him

that we are now within a month of the Budget debate and I am sure that his topic will have much relevance to the discussions that take place then.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): Is the Leader of the House aware that a serious situation is developing in the West Yorkshire police authority, which has a new joint board? That authority is committed by the Home Office to provide a force which will cost £63 million, but the Department of the Environment guideline states that it can spend only £52 million. That means that the authority will have to introduce new labour-saving incentives not to pre-empt the precept which will take it into penalties under the DoE guidelines. Failing that, the authority will have to reduce the force next year by 1,300 men. Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement to be made to the House?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will understand that I am in no position to comment on the situation that he has outlined. I will of course refer his point to my hon. Friends who have interests in these matters.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to early-day motion 57 standing in my name? The motion calls for the introduction of a blindness allowance, and has been signed by nearly 270 hon. Members of all parties. Another 20 hon. Members have signed the amendment, making a total of nearly 300 Members.

[That this House, whilst appreciating all that has been done for the blind by this and previous governments, wishes to remind the Government of the acceptance by successive Ministers of the case for a blindness allowance and, in particular, the statement by the then Minister of State for Social Security and the Disabled (the Right honourable Member for Daventry) on 24th July 1979 that the case for an income in the form of a blindness allowance is unanswerable on its merits; points out to the Government that the blind do not normally qualify for mobility, invalidity, attendance or other allowances, unless suffering from a second disability; and calls upon the Government to take immediate action to replace the existing range of benefits available to the blind with a means-tested blindness allowance.]

Given that Ministers and Front Bench spokesmen do not usually sign early-day motions, that means that more than 50 per cent. of hon. Members eligible to vote signed the motion. That reveals a great deal of interest. Will my right hon. Friend therefore find an early day for a debate on that subject?

Mr. Biffen: I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend on engaging in a well-organised and successful pre-Budget initiative. The most appropriate time for debate will be when the Budget is presented.

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): Will next Thursday's debate on procedure allow discussion on what has now sadly become the Friday fiasco, in which private Members' Bills, before they are discussed, are objected to? If that is not possible next Thursday, will the right hon. Gentleman look closely into the matter?

Mr. Biffen: The topics to be discussed are those contained in the Procedure Committee reports and recommendations to which I have referred. The Procedure Committee has not recently attended to the subject to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): In view of the number of members of Her Majesty's Government who are still publicly advising my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on how best to win the general election, will my right hon. Friend arrange, in his capacity as the Leader of the House, for those people to be given leave of absence to take the waters at Aix-les-Bains, Bath or some other suitable English spa, so that the rest of the Government can get on with governing the country?

Mr. Biffen: I think my hon. Friend owes it to the House to tell us how many he thinks will be left behind.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Has the Leader of the House heard the strong speculation that the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is announcing today plans to sell the whole of the Forestry Commission's 3 million acres? If that is the case, will he ensure that that announcement is made in the House—not at a press conference—later this afternoon if necessary?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I confess that I have not heard any such report, but I will certainly investigate the matter.

Mr. Alexander Pollock (Moray): May I echo the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and stress to my right hon. Friend that there would be considerable disquiet on the Conservative Benches if there were to be privatisation of the Forestry Commission?

Mr. Biffen: I can well understand that, and that is why I answered the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) in the rather measured way that I did.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Does the Leader of the House accept that the waters of Welsh politics are not as calm as he suggested earlier? As the usual channels have so far failed to agree on which day, in the view of the House, is St. David's day, will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that there will be an early debate under the stewardship of his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, who has again this week managed to generate a crisis between himself and the Welsh local authorities which might lead to the Secretary of State's induced resignation?

Mr. Biffen: Among all the many hon. Members who look forward to an early debate upon the principality, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales looks forward with the greatest anticipation.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): Is my right hon. Friend aware that anxiety about the statement on the Forestry Commission by my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is not restricted to Scottish Members? It seems that there is no information in the building about that statement. Is my right hon. Friend aware that 750 acres of prime land in my constituency have been the subject of private negotiations between the Forestry Commission and a somewhat disreputable firm of London developers? That is causing great anxiety to the local authorities in my constituency, but I have been able to find out little about the matter. Does he agree that there is a need for an early debate in the House about the Government's intentions and the implications of the matter?

Mr. Biffen: If the position is as the hon. Member for Cathcart tentatively outlined, I would say at once that that

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was a matter which would require the attention of the House, but, as I said to the hon. Gentleman, I should like to look into the matter, and that I certainly shall do.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): When can we have a debate on road safety? Is the Minister aware of the anxiety felt in Leicestershire over the Government's refusal to take any action over the continuing series of deaths and tragedies on the Groby road? It is not good enough merely to say that it is a matter for the county council, especially as the county council happens to be Tory-dominated and does as little as possible to help the people?

Mr. Biffen: The topic is undoubtedly important. It has that range of interest which would commend itself to Question Time on Monday rather than to a debate.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Leader of the House undertake to ensure that there will be a debate within a week or so at most—in any case before Easter—after the publication of the report on nuclear waste by the Select Committee on the Environment, which we know is expected in the first half of next month? It should be on the whole subject contained in that report. It is important, given the anxiety expressed in the House yesterday and today in the European Parliament, which looks forward to seeing the report and its recommendations.

Mr. Biffen: That is undoubtedly a most important report. The first link in the sequence of events must be the Government's consideration of and formal observations upon the report. We can perhaps consider the matter after we have got that far.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): May I suggest that my right hon. Friend does not proceed too quickly to introduce the Shops Bill in the House, so as to give the Government enough time to consult colleagues on both sides of the House as to how the Bill can be properly amended before it is considered here?

Mr. Biffen: I shall pass on those worldly wise and good-natured observations to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The Patronage Secretary will have heard them, as he sits here.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): In view of the rumours about the sale of the Forestry Commission and in view of the fact that the right hon. Gentleman does not seem to know what is going on, will he at least guarantee —this falls directly within his power—that there will be a debate on the matter in the House before the Government take any such action?

Mr. Biffen: It is not that I do not seem; it is that I do not know. I have said that I will look into the matter. My first obligation is to look into the matter and establish the facts and consider the appropriate action thereafter.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Has my right hon. Friend seen press reports today which way that 200,000 London households will have rate reductions following the abolition of the GLC? Does that not underline the urgent need for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to come to the House and announce his intention to get rid of the wrecking amendment to the Local Government Bill which was passed in the other place? It would permit the continuation of activities similar to those of the GLC which has given £5,000 to Ealing CND to conduct a completely spurious campaign to make Ealing a nuclear-free zone from 1 April? The Bill is needed to deal with actions similar to those of Labour councillors in Ealing who attempted to give £2,000 of public money to Militant councillors in Liverpool and Hackney. Happily, they were defeated.

Mr. Biffen: I am delighted to endorse my hon. Friend's satisfaction at some of the consequences of the abolition of the GLC. On the matter of amendments to the local government legislation that have been passed in another place, I think that we shall have to pause for reflection. At the moment I cannot advise my hon. Friend on what is likely to be the Government's reaction.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Now that the United States Senate has had a debate on the Philippines elections and has declared them as fraudulent, is it not right that the House, which has approved overseas aid to the Marcos regime and which is committed to human rights, should have a debate on that important matter?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who is very agile in these matters, will use such opportunities as will be presented by overseas aid Questions on Monday. I shall certainly mention the wider issue of a debate to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): In the light of today's impudent debate on the subject of Sellafield, will my right hon. Friend tell the impotent but power-hungry poseurs of the European Assembly to keep their foreign noses out of our business and to jump in the Rhine or whatever deep and fast-flowing stretch of European water they find most appropriate? If that is too raucous for my right hon. Friend, will he undertake that he will, in no circumstances, bring measures before the House which enhance the powers or prestige of that misbegotten institution?

Mr. Biffen: I do not think that any of that necessarily strictly arises out of next week's business. It seems to me that when my hon. Friend begins to address himself to the matters of the Strasbourg Assembly he begins to pick up the bad habits of Mr. Leslie Huckfield.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Further to the rumours of the possible privatisation of the Forestry Commission land, we understand that the Leader of the House has not received any information that such a statement is being made. If a statement is being made and if his inquiries show that a statement has been made outside the House, will he make arrangements for a statement to be made to the House later today? We have all had enough of statements being made outside the House.

Mr. Biffen: As I have said to the hon. Member for Cathcart, I shall look into the matter and consider it in the light of what is revealed.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Following the significant question of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and in view of the fact that politics is allegedly all about priorities, will my right hon. Friend consider whether the Shops Bill deserves the

priority it has been accorded hitherto? Might it not be for the convenience of the House and the better conduct of its business if it were quietly dropped?

Mr. Biffen: Although I belong to the political school whose motto is "one difficulty at a time", I say to my hon. Friend that this is a Bill which was outlined in the Queen's Speech and which has received very careful consideration in another place. Of course I take account of his views, but I do not hold out a prospect of any intention to drop the legislation.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take into account the business before the House today. I am reluctant to curtail business questions, but I must limit them to a further 10 minutes.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Further to the alleged statement of the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and in view of the fact that, if it were true, he would have taken leave of his senses, will the Leader of the House make the opportunity available to the Minister to come to the House and deny that he has proposed to sell 3 million acres, particularly in view of the fact that land prices are already plummeting as a result of the collapse in agricultural incomes and that that would finally remove the bankers' security?

Mr. Biffen: I have tried to answer fairly the question put to me by the hon. Member for Cathcart. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to leave it at that.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widespread opposition in the country to the Shops Bill? Will he not hide behind niceties of procedure but come clean and tell us whether the Government will accept an amendment of substance which will preserve the special character of Sunday?

Mr. Biffen: The handling of the Bill is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, and I shall draw to his attention the anxiety expressed by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I understand that the Leader of the House is not aware of the announcement about the sale of Forestry Commission lands. Can I assure him that there is what appears to be an authoritative statement on the tapes, referring specifically to the sale of 3 million acres of forestry land, quoting a revenue of £1,500 million which the Treasury expects to receive, and stating specifically that the Government intend that Forestry Commission holdings shall be taken over by City institutions? In view of the performance of the City in financing British industry, does the Leader of the House think that our national heritage, rural employment and the environment are safe in the hands of those people? If the statement is not true, will the Government immediately refute the announcement on the tapes? If it is true, will the Minister ensure that we have either a statement or a debate later today or early next week?

Mr. Biffen: I note what the hon. Gentleman has said. I am sure that he will understand that, having given my reply to the hon. Member for Cathcart, there is not much that I can add.

Sir Paul Hawkins (Norfolk, South-West): Will my right hon. Friend pass to our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food my complete opposition to any sale of forestry land, as my constituency contains probably the largest acreage in England, and is a great environmental and recreational area?

Mr. Biffen: I really do not know what I have done to deserve this. I was not aware of the suggestions that were made by the hon. Member for Cathcart. I told him that I would look into the matter, and that I most certainly shall.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): Is it now possible to get a sensible statement from the Government about the decision by the independent colliery review tribunal, recommending that Bates' colliery should remain open against the vehement opposition of the National Coal Board? The Leader of the House will be well aware from our correspondence and my previous questions that the Secretary of State for Energy simply cannot do anything to influence the NCB, and that the NCB has been prevaricating and messing about for 16 days, and has flatly refused to decide whether to accept or reject the recommendations. That is unfair on 1,400 of my constituents who work in the mine. Will the Leader of the House intervene, and state what the Government's position is?

Mr. Biffen: All I can say is that, if it is a question of ministerial influence, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy is certainly in a more appropriate position than any other Minister, and I shall draw his attention to the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Will there be a statement next week on the disposal of nuclear waste?

Mr. Biffen: I have no observation to make at present.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): When can we expect a debate on London Regional Transport? During the hour-and-a-half debate the other week only two London Labour Members could speak, and one of them was limited to two minutes. That is supposed to be the system that replaces full-scale accountability by the Greater London council. Clearly, it is inadequate. When can we have another debate?

Mr. Biffen: As the hon. Gentleman has observed, we have debated the subject recently, and, like many hon. Members, he feels that the debate was not sufficiently wide or long. I shall make that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. But, being a realist, I suggest that for the moment he had better take his luck with transport questions on Monday.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): In view of the increasing probability of violence in the Province of Ulster, will my right hon. Friend make time for an early debate so that at least hon. Members understand what is likely to happen before that probability turns into a virtual certainty?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. In the interim, questions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland arise on Thursday, and I am sure that all parts of the House will wish hon. Members from the Province to be present and to participate.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): In view of the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Woodall) by the Home Secretary about the financing of the west Yorkshire police force, and in view of the reply

[Mr. William O'Brien]

given to my hon. Friend the Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) on the same subject, will the Leader of the House note that this is a serious question because the Home Office is saying that the police force there requires £63 million, and the capping by the Department of the Environment is set at £52 million? That is a vast difference. No policeman can be made redundant. Will the Leader of the House assure us that, if agreement cannot be reached between the two Departments, he will bring the matter before the House so that we can debate and resolve it? It is a serious matter for west Yorkshire, and we should like to see it resolved.

Mr. Biffen: I truly do not doubt that it is a serious matter for west Yorkshire. It is imperative that the problem should be solved. As I said in answer to an earlier question, I shall refer the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Will my right hon. Friend widen the scope of Tuesday's debate on rate limitation, so that the House can be made aware of the problems in Leicester with the city council, which has now levied a new rate of 45·5p in the pound—an 80 per cent. increase for 1986-87—and which has told the ratepayers "That's it. You can't even go and argue."? Businesses cannot argue, and that will reduce the number of jobs.

Also, during Thursday's debate on procedure, could consideration be given to those unfortunate Conservative Members who are having to suffer Labour Members entering their constituencies and addressing public meetings without having the courtesy to inform them?

Mr. Biffen: Let me at once answer the allegations of infringing one of the well-known restrictive parliamentary practices of preserving one's constituency from the ravages of travelling opponents. None of that arises on the Committee's recommendations on procedure, so my hon. Friend should look to an Adjournment debate to make his point.

As to the former matter, my hon. Friend is now such an acknowledged parliamentarian that he will have no difficulty in making the speech of Leicester as though it belonged to the nation.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the Leader of the House please recall the statement made by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 9 January 1985 when he promised to announce the sites that would be identified for the possible disposal of nuclear waste? Is he aware that some sources have it that the information on those sites has been on the Secretary of State's desk for the past five months and that for some reason he is unable to face the House with them? Will he agree to make representations to the Secretary of State to bring the statement forward, so that the anxiety felt in the rest of the country can be modified?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will realise that, during business questions, I never make speculative references to statements, but I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the issue.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is no case for the British taxpayer to own one square inch of ground on which to grow unprofitable trees? Is he aware that the only thing wrong with the statement of the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is that it should have been made several years ago?

Mr. Biffen: I believe that I have gone through enough questions about that elusive topic. I shall just say, "How interesting."

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I ask, for the eighth time, for a debate on the report of the Select Committee of Privileges on the confidentiality of Select Committees?

Regarding the statement that is about to be made to the House on the new method of providing unemployment statistics and the fiddling of the figures, can we have a debate on the way those statistics are compiled? This is the only opportunity that we shall have today to ask the Leader of the House that question. Will he give me a direct reply?

Mr. Biffen: On the first question, I believe that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to confess that he is an assiduous attender of these little sessions on Thursday afternoons. I answered his question last week and said that there would be a debate on the Select Committee of Privilege's report.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman's second question could well be considered in the wider context of a debate on employment, but I suggest that we see how matters stand after the statement.

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Kenneth Clarke—statement.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take points of orders after the statement.

Mr. Adley: It is directly related to what we have been discussing.

Mr. Speaker: I shall still take it afterwards.

Unemployment Figures

4.7 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on changes to unemployment figures.

I announced yesterday that at the request of our Department's statisticians, and in order to ensure greater accuracy, I have agreed that the compilation and publication of the monthly unemployment statistics will take place some two weeks later than at present. This is not a major change in presentation, but the improved estimates will allow a more complete and accurate picture to be given of the latest labour market developments. I have placed further details in the Library.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): While the Opposition welcome the fact that the Government have at last been forced to make a statement about what they are doing, this eight-line statement is an insult to the intelligence of hon. Members. We are forced to read the Library statement to see the real intent and impact of this further fiddling of the unemployment figures. I am forced to ask several questions to establish the true intent of the so-called adjustment, which has more to do with the political intentions of the Department than with the economic statisticians' request.

Does the Paymaster General accept that the change in the presentation of the monthly employment figures means that they are now to include monthly figures for earnings and monthly figures for industrial disputes, which were previously issued on different days, to distract attention away from the single announcement of the unemployment figures? Does the Minister accept that, if he wished to adopt that rationale, he should have included the inflation figures with the earnings and employment figures, or does he want separate treatment of the inflation figures?

Can he confirm that the new method of calculation will reduce unemployment figures in absolute terms by more than 60,000 people, making it the eighth adjustment, effecting a reduction of more than 500,000 in the unemployment figures, since 1979?

Is the Minister aware that the changes — *[Interruption.]* I hope that hon. Members will listen, because the accusation against the Government is that they are not giving a clear picture of the position. Is the Minister aware that the Department's claims that the changes are consistent with international practice are not entirely correct, as they involve including the self-employed in the labour figures of the percentage unemployed? That will have the direct effect of reducing the percentage of unemployment figures, which, according to the Library, would reduce the January figures of 14·1 per cent. down to the new Tory international standard of 12·4 per cent.—a 20 per cent. cut at a stroke.

Can the Paymaster General confirm that the method of calculation is not consistent with the international OECD standard and that his Department on 14 January 1985 in a written answer to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) stated that such a calculation would have an unfair effect on the figures? Why did the Department change its decision?

The reason for the change is not only to fiddle the figures ever downwards, but to include the new survey that the Department is to launch in June this year, which will show inflated figures for the self-employed, which by definition will reduce the percentage of unemployment in the figures. Is it not a coincidence that the new figures to reduce the percentage of the unemployed coincide with the new public relations campaign that the Government have launched at a cost of £1 million to improve their image on employment, which the Secretary of State for Employment has called "compassion in action"? Let the Minister understand that these policies do not kid the electorate, or the unemployed, or the additional 1,000 people who are made redundant by Lucas in Birmingham.

Mr. Clarke: I ask the hon. Gentleman to take the unlikely step of imagining himself, for a moment, in my position or in that of my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment. The statisticians in our Department said, "We have discovered that a high and unacceptable error is being made in our monthly unemployment figures," and they asked for our permission to correct the error. We gave permission. That was the basis of yesterday's announcement. Is the hon. Gentleman saying that if he were the Secretary of State for Employment he would say to statisticians "No, no—do not correct this mistake. Carry on making what you regard as an error, and carry on turning in each month unemployment figures that are higher than they ought to be."? We know that the hon. Gentleman would not say that, because this morning on breakfast television he was asked that question and he had to agree that he would have made the self-same statement if, as he put it, he had been faced with a reasonably justifiable point of the kind that was put to him.

Mr. Prescott: Yes.

Mr. Clarke: I do not want to advise the hon. Gentleman about how to behave towards civil servants, were he ever to take office, but he has provoked, without my knowing that the person in question was going to do this, the senior statistician in my Department to go public and to make it clear that he asked for this correction to be made. The hon. Gentleman will be able to imagine that my statisticians must privately agree from time to time that they have enough trouble with arguments from me about their figures. I shall go back to my Department and quote the old Hilaire Belloc adage:

> "And always keep a hold of Nurse
> For fear of finding something worse."

We are producing, with professional advice, more accurate figures than we were before. The hon. Gentleman is making a ludicrous fuss about it. He wound up on breakfast television by comparing my right hon. and noble Friend and me to President Marcos of the Philippines because we accepted our statisticians' advice.

Then we get to the question why, when removing this error means that the figures are to appear a fortnight later, we are combining the figures with those for the rate of unemployment and the growth in new employment. The answer is because, a fortnight later, they will come out, in most months, either on the same day or the day before. It is therefore sensible to present them together as one picture of the labour market.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the rate of unemployment that we used. I assume that most right hon. and hon. Gentlemen know that the rate of unemployment is the number of people who are unemployed at any given

[Mr. Clarke]

time compared with the number of people who are in work. It is true that, for years, that figure has not included the self-employed and the armed forces. However, because the number of self-employed is increasing, it is becoming steadily less realistic as a figure. The hon. Gentleman says that this is not the international figure. Nor would the one that we should otherwise put out be an international figure. However, there is an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figure which he can have. That is available and the hon. Gentleman can cite it, if he wishes. All these figures are available, as are all the other changes that we are making.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will take the point of order after the Minister has completed his reply.

Mr. Clarke: I believe that we should have a sensible and continuing debate about the policy issues that affect self-employment, unemployment, new employment and the way in which we should deal with these problems. The idea that we should have a debate or an oral statement on the statistics is, frankly, to worry about the footnotes and the methodology of the Department's experts. The hon. Gentleman entirely misses the point of the debate.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: I shall take the point of order from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan).

Mr. Maclennan: I wonder, Mr. Speaker, whether you received notification from the Minister that he was introducing his Budget speech this afternoon.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I congratulate the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) on turning hypocrisy into an art form. Will he come to the Dispatch Box this afternoon and deny what he told a television interviewer this morning: that, had he been confronted with the same figures from the Government statistician, he would have done the same? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before these exchanges get out of control, may I ask hon. Members please to ask questions of the Paymaster General, not questions about the reactions of the Opposition?

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): If the right hon. and learned Gentleman had such a good case for the new statement of figures that he is introducing, why did he not come and state it himself? Must we attribute it to the bashfulness of his nature that he did not come forward immediately? Since this surreptitious publication of the change, to use no harsher word, and since there was so much objection to the earlier change in the published figures that was introduced by the chairman of the Conservative party when he was Secretary of State for Employment, may we have a guarantee from the Government and the Minister that there will be no further changes in the way that the unemployment figures are presented—at least not before the next general election?

Mr. Clarke: I have come to make an oral statement because of my genuine respect for the House. There was a demand yesterday for an oral statement and I have made an oral statement. The complaint now is that the statement contains only eight lines. I regarded this, and I still regard it, as written answer stuff. A technical change is being made, at the behest of technical and professional advisers in the Department, in the way that the figures are compiled. I am not responsible for the fact that a political row is being built upon it.

In a debate last week, I challenged the shadow Chancellor to say whether a Labour Government would reintroduce the system whereby the unemployed had to register both at the jobcentre and at the unemployment benefit office simply in order that the unemployment figures could be increased. I challenge the Opposition to say whether they would go back to a system whereby retired schoolmasters and retired bank managers would have to sign on, simply in order to increase the unemployment figures. Of course not. The changes have been made in the interests of accuracy and the figures are more accurate than the previous figures. I do not believe that any Opposition Member would take a different step from that taken by the Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take account of the fact that later this afternoon there is to be an important debate on public expenditure. I have now received notice of a Standing Order No. 10 application and I propose to bring the exchanges on the statement to an end at 4.30.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): When my right hon. and learned Friend next takes into account possible changes in the unemployment figures to reflect the position even more truthfully, will he also take fully into account the many thousands of people who are merrily working away but who at the same time are drawing unemployment benefit and social security benefit? Is he aware that, despite what the Opposition say, the real fiddling is in that sector?

Mr. Clarke: The labour force survey, the result of which will appear later this year, will reveal another clear picture of the labour market. If past surveys are anything to go by, it will reveal that quite a lot of people who appear in the unemployment count as claimants are not seeking work. The last labour force survey showed that about one third had not sought work in the previous week, either because they were not available for work or because they already had a job. On the other hand, about 800,000 who would probably take a job if one was available do not appear in the count. When we make those corrections, they still produce a lower figure for unemployment than that which the Government normally use.

Mr. James Hamilton (Motherwell, North): Will the Minister recognise that, no matter how much he fiddles the figures and no matter how hard the statisticians work to give him acceptable figures, Scotland still has the highest unemployment in its history? Will he bear in mind the fact that in Motherwell in two local elections recently the Tory candidate was at the bottom of the poll, with the Communist party candidate defeating the Tory candidate in one case? Will he come clean and give us the true figures?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has accused me with less vehemence than his hon. Friends of fiddling the figures. I hope that sooner or later one Opposition Member will point to the inaccuracy which the Opposition say is

taking place and which lays the foundation for the allegation of fiddling. The fact is that they do not make any allegation of inaccuracy but just make wild allegations. The hon. Gentleman went on to the more serious subject of the problem of unemployment in parts of Scotland and elsewhere. That is why our main activities are devoted not to the blessed statistical arguments about figures, but to producing new policies of assistance to the long-term unemployed, the young unemployed and the others.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is the Paymaster General aware that he has completely demolished the absurd position about this entirely technical change? Since he himself referred to the real debate and the real figures of unemployed, is he aware that there is a House of Commons research note in the Library which presumably is objective and which says that, allowing for some double counting, the true figure tots up to 4·9 million? If one knocks off 1 million, one gets 3·9 million unemployed. As it now seems that the public sector borrowing requirement will be about £5 billion instead of £8 billion or £9 billion when the Budget is announced, when will the Government take significant expansionary action to reduce unemployment?

Mr. Clarke: I have not seen that research note. My reaction at this stage is that I do not see how one can remotely and sensibly get anywhere near a figure of 4·9 million as the total unemployed. I shall try to study that and challenge with the Library the methodology, with the assistance of those who advise the Government at 1 who compile our figures. I have never heard of such a figure and I regard it as fanciful. I agree with my hon. Friend that we should be devoting our efforts to what we can do to speed up the rate of job creation and tackle the real problem. Last year's Budget contained significant measures which will boost employment. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] The changes in national insurance contributions, which were a major step last year, did not even come into effect until October. I am sure that last year's Budget for jobs is still working through. This year's Budget is the next significant step which we are all awaiting.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the Paymaster General accept that the House was annoyed yesterday not just because the information was given by written answer but because there was a press briefing before the answer was available to hon. Members? As the right hon. and learned Member has said that he does not approve of that practice, can the House assume that that shoddy contempt of the House arose because the decision was taken by his boss, Lord Young, who is not even accountable to this place? If there is such great zeal for accuracy in the Department of Employment, will it seek to give us regularly an estimate of the number who are unemployed but not registered for benefit?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. and noble Friend and I know nothing of any briefing that may or may not have taken place yesterday and we knew nothing about it at the time. I think that the whole fuss would not have taken place but for the fact that the information was given on the television news yesterday at lunchtime and various Opposition Members got hold of the wrong end of the stick.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, having heard his statement and the hot air from the Opposition, his hon. Friends who sit behind him think that this whole matter is a complete waste of time?

Mr. Clarke: I agree.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Since the Minister has refused to give an undertaking that he will not fiddle the figures again before the next general election, may I suggest what the next fiddle might be? He might save a lot of work in his Department if, instead of getting his statisticians to estimate the figures, he asked the Metropolitan police, who estimate the numbers on nuclear disarmament demonstrations in London, to do it. In that way he would probably crack the problem completely.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman repeats the allegation of fiddling. Although he cannot reply, I ask him what he would do when faced with the statistician's position. Is he really saying that we should put back into the figures 55,000 phantom people whom we know are not unemployed so that we may inflate the figure to what it was previously?

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): Will my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is a grave insult to the record number of self-employed to insinuate that they do not work and that they do not count? Does he agree that the significant statistics are the net increase in new jobs each month and the proportion of the population in work? Will he ensure that when the statistics are published there will be simultaneous publication of our favourable record compared with our European partners?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful. I agree that we must accept that more and more people are becoming self-employed. That has been the trend for many years; it will be increasingly the trend in future and it is wholly desirable. Therefore, any unemployment figure that takes no account of the self-employed is not realistic or useful. I think that in due course the Opposition will realise that.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Will the Minister confirm that the last time the Government dared to publish a labour force survey the figures showed that the Government's statistics exaggerated by 110,000 the number of people employed? Since there is a strong possibility that the present statistics exaggerate the number of people who are self-employed, as well as the number who are employees, why have the Government postponed the publication of the 1984 census of employment which they originally promised to publish before Christmas?

Mr. Clarke: We do not postpone these things. It is not a question of when we dare to produce things like the labour force survey results. We publish them when they are ready and when the statisticians are prepared to put their professional reputation on the line. I quite accept— *[Interruption.]* Before Opposition Members start to make false points again, they should remember that, when we produce figures for the number of new jobs and the number of self-employed month by month, they are the best estimates that can be made on past trends and on the last labour force survey. When we get the results of the next labour force survey we will know what the figure is; it may be more or it may be less. I assure the House that we

[Mr. Clarke]

publish the figures and stick to them; we stick to the best professional estimates that can be made on them thereafter.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Will my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the important criteria when considering unemployment statistics are that the methodology should be consistent month by month and that the figures should be as accurate as possible? Do not the changes mean that the figures will be more rather than less accurate? As there seems to be some doubt among the Opposition about the alleged fiddle, will my right hon. and learned Friend arrange for a briefing from his statisticians to be placed in the Library to show exactly the methodology adopted so as to give the Opposition a chance of identifying where the alleged fiddle takes place? Clearly, a fiddle does not exist.

Mr. Clarke: I am quite happy to say that my Department will continue to make available as much information as is wanted about the methodology that is used. There is a publication known as the *Employment Gazette* which sets out in copious detail exactly how the figures are produced. I agree with my hon. Friend that it would be a courtesy to the House if the Opposition would specify exactly the error or mistake that they claim gives rise to a fiddle. The methodology of the Opposition appears to be to think of a figure which might be the number of unemployed and double it.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Is the Minister aware that the country will see this as the fourth cosmetic attempt — [HON. MEMBERS: "Eighth."] — the eighth cosmetic attempt to drive down the unemployment figures? Will the Minister address himself to the problem of the 7,000 people who are without jobs in my constituency? Will he tell them that they are phantoms and that they are hypothetical?

Mr. Clarke: The people to whom I referred as phantom unemployed are the extra number who, as it turns out, were counted in error. The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), has agreed so far that he would have made the change that we have made. I am still waiting to hear what change in what we are proposing the Opposition would make. If they came to office, I do not believe that they would tell the statisticians to start inflating the figures.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Is it not clear from the Opposition's reaction that they are far more interested in making political capital out of the unemployed than in the accuracy of the figures?

Mr. Clarke: I am not sure what they are making, but I believe that they think that they are making capital, or they did when they started on this tack.

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): Is the Minister aware that the effect of this further manipulation of the unemployment figures, added to recent Government behaviour over Westland and British Leyland, will be that hardly anyone will believe any Minister on anything?

Mr. Clarke: The right hon. Gentleman has considerable experience — far more than I have — of being in government and playing a responsible role in government. Is he asserting that when in office he has told his statisticians to to perpetuate an error, which appears to be the suggestion of some Opposition Members?

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend is aware that the House and the country want the truth. I am sure also that he is aware that there are 774,000 unemployed in the south-east, including 400,500 in Greater London. I am told, and I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend is as well, that there is a shortage of people looking for work and that there are too many jobs and not enough people taking the work. Obviously there is an element of voluntary unemployment. The truth that the country wants to know is how many of the members of the permanent labour force cannot get jobs. It seems to be a far lower figure than the figure that we have now.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. The position varies greatly in different parts of the country. I was in Peckham yesterday, and within Southwark there are more jobs than residents. There are many unemployed in Peckham, partly because they do not have the necessary skills and training to enable them to apply for jobs that are taken by others living outside the area. In the south and the midlands especially, there are those who appear in our count as unemployed, and when we hold a labour force survey they turn out to be already in work or not currently searching for work. The position is complex and we should address ourselves to helping those who really matter — those who are genuinely unemployed — when considering these figures.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): The number of questions following the Minister's statement reflect the fact that we should have been presented with a proper statement from the right hon. and learned Gentleman instead of an eight-line statement. Will he inform the House and the country why he has introduced a change in the statistics which 12 months ago the Department refused to accept on the ground of unfairness? Will he deny that the changes that he has introduced will reduce the percentage from 14·1 to 12·4 without creating one job? Will he confirm that this is the eighth adjustment of the unemployment figures that has taken place since the Government took office, and that if this method of producing statistics had been used by the previous Labour Government there would have been fewer than 800,000 unemployed in 1979?

Mr. Clarke: Some of the changes that we have made have increased the number who are regarded as unemployed. The change that affected the severely disabled increased the total by about 23,000, and the change which led to signing on in unemployment offices once every fortnight instead of once a week increased the total by about 20,000. However, these changes have been made for the sake of accuracy. As for the rate of unemployment, the hon. Gentleman can have the old figure which excludes the self-employed and those in the armed forces if he wants it, or he can have the new figure, which includes them. In my opinion, the new figure is better. It strikes me as entirely artificial to have a rate of unemployment which ignores the fact that there is a rapidly growing number of self-employed.

Later——

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The House has heard with concern a

Minister's statement which has a profound political effect and which related to the change in the way in which unemployment figures and statistics are to be produced——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It sounds as if the hon. and learned Gentleman is about to complain that he was not called when questions were asked following the statement.

Mr. Janner: No, Mr. Speaker. I ask that you be kind enough to consider, Mr. Speaker, whether it is in order for a Minister in such circumstances to blame civil servants for the change in the methodology used to produce the figures rather than himself. It is almost unknown for a Minister to say that upon the advice of his statisticians and at their request a change has been made, rather than taking the blame himself. It is a matter of privilege if not one of order.

Mr. Speaker: If it is a matter of privilege, the hon. and learned Member knows what he must do about that. I am not responsible for what is said from the Front Bench or even from the Back Benches.

Early-day Motions

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I draw to your attention a mistake that appears in today's Order Paper in respect of early-day motion 459, to which my name has been appended? I checked the matter with the Table Office, which confirmed that I did not sign the document. I was told that the instructions given to the printer did not contain my name. When an error of this sort is made hon. Members find themselves in considerable embarrassment in their constituencies and elsewhere. The contents of early-day motion 459 are completely and utterly anathema to me; it is a motion to which I would not be a party. Perhaps steps can be taken to ensure that neither I nor other hon. Members are placed in this embarrassment in future. Perhaps the printers concerned will convey an apology in due course.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for drawing this matter to my attention. I have made inquiries and I accept fully that embarrassment has been caused to him. An error was made at the printers and I shall ensure that the necessary corrections are made.

Sedentary Interventions

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to draw your attention to a serious error in the *Official Report* of our proceedings in the report of the debate on the private rented sector of housing which took place last night. During the debate, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) said, "We want the Rent Acts to be strengthened, not weakened." At that point I made a sedentary interjection. I said, "They should be scrapped." Unfortunately, it appears that the *Official Report* heard only the last word, "scrapped". However, it did not hear that word correctly because the word that appears in the *Official Report* is a four-letter word that I would not personally use but which is not dissimilar to "scrapped".

I can understand the difficulty, especially when sedentary interjections are made, of those who are members of the *Official Report*. I hope that the error was not a Freudian slip on their part in response to the speech of the hon. Member for Perry Barr. I regard this as an extremely serious matter, and I hope that the error will be put right.

On making a complaint about this matter in the office of the *Official Report*, I was told that this was not the first time that the word in question had been used in the Chamber——

Mr. Speaker: Let us not deal with that. I have looked into this matter. If Mr. Deputy Speaker, who was in the Chair at the time, had heard the word which appears in print in the *Official Report*, he would have ruled it out of order. I accept that it is not a word that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) would use. However, this sort of thing is likely to happen when Members make comments from a sedentary position.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I did not hear the word uttered that is printed in *Hansard*, and I think it important that the record should be corrected. It is important also that we have it on record for the electors of Fulham that another Tory Member wants the Rent Acts to be scrapped.

Mr. Speaker: I should have said to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West that I shall, of course, have the record corrected.

Forestry Commission

4.41 pm

Mr. Brynmor John (Pontypridd): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Forestry Commission to draw up plans to sell off its holdings."

This will mean that 3 million acres of public woodland will be sold off and that will raise £1,500 million for the Exchequer.

The matter is specific because it deals with a press release, issued at lunchtime today, through the Government's favourite method of communication, the Press Association. It is urgent because it involves the country's assets and the future of the rural environment. It also involves employment in Britain. It is urgent because it is yet another example of the bypassing of Parliament and of plans being drawn up without an opportunity for an important debate. The only way it can be debated is for the House to be adjourned and the matter to be properly brought before us.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Pontypridd (Mr. John) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the request of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to the Forestry Commission to draw up plans to sell off its holdings."

I have listened with great care to what the hon. Gentleman has said and I also listened to the exchanges in the House during business questions. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised to be appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. Therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and his right hon. and hon. Friends.

4.43 pm

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John MacGregor): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 (Cmnd. 9702).

I welcome this opportunity to open the annual debate on the Government's public expenditure White Paper. I should like first to refer briefly to the role of public expenditure in the economic strategy; second, to outline the main features of this year's White Paper; third, to respond as is customary to the report prepared on the White Paper by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee; and, finally, to say something about two other key issues, value for money and capital expenditure.

There are many reasons why restraint of public expenditure to levels the nation can afford lies at the heart of the Government's economic strategy for achieving a strong economy with low inflation. First, experience has taught us that restraint of public expenditure is essential if inflation is to be held down. In the 1960s and 1970s almost all industrial countries saw public expenditure rise faster than national income. In part this reflected the view that public spending could be an engine for growth and could sustain employment. In part it came from the rise in the pressure group society—and of course there are always boundless good causes — and the failure of Governments to make the choices required of them. In part it arose because the systems and mechanics for controlling expenditure were inadequate, especially in the face of rising inflation. How well some of us recall what planning in volume terms did for control of public spending under the last Labour Government.

In Britain public expenditure rose from around 35 per cent. of GDP in the early 1960s to around 45 per cent. at the start of the 1980s. This was accompanied by accelerating inflation, increasing debt, rising unemployment, increasing uncompetitiveness and, hence, slow destruction of many of our industries. There is little empirical evidence here that public spending was strengthening our economy, thus shattering the thesis that throwing more taxpayers' money at any problem produces higher growth and more jobs. Between 1970 and 1980 spending in the economy in money terms rose by 35 per cent.—but only 19 per cent. of that was real output. The rest was dissipated in rising prices.

The realisation that expenditure should be planned against a prudent assessment of what the nation can afford —that finance should determine expenditure and not the other way round — is now widely shared. For when growth fell short of optimistic assumptions, it was not public spending that was cut back. It was the private sector that took the rap in higher taxes, higher interest rates, and hence an inevitable squeeze on output and on its contribution to GDP. The burden of creating the wealth was falling on fewer and fewer shoulders—the process of transferring wealth was assuming a larger and larger share of GDP.

Secondly, restraint in public spending is essential if the overall amounts recouped in direct taxation from the pay packets of people, often with very modest incomes, are to be reduced and if we are to overcome the problem of incentives to work.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): If the Chief Secretary has completed his initial passage, I wish to correct a slip of the tongue which he has made. The right hon. Gentleman says that GDP rose to its peak in the early 1980s. Its peak was in the mid 1980s after five years of this Government.

Mr. MacGregor: I do not recall saying that.

Today I am looking at the long-term picture and making no comments about the interrelationship between public expenditure and taxation in the next few weeks. The message of the Green Paper on longer term trends in public expenditure and taxation published two years ago was that if we are to reverse in time the rising trend of taxation, then restraint of public expenditure must be sustained over a number of years. In a world where there are so many uncertainties outside our own control — the House is very conscious of the impact on tax revenues of the falling price of oil recently — sticking to prudent targets of public spending is more vital than ever.

Thirdly, restraint of public spending goes even wider than improving the way our economy works, critical though that is. It is at the heart of the kind of society which this Government are seeking to build: a society based on choice, on freedom and on responsibility; a society in which people keep more of what they earn to spend or save as they decide; and a society in which industrial and commercial companies are left with greater capacity of their own to invest, and to earn a good return.

The White Paper that we are debating today is an important part of that strategy. As the House knows, it represents the final stage in the annual review of public spending, which began almost a year earlier. It sets out the Government's plans for spending over the next three years, but obviously in greater detail and with more precision and finality for the first year. With a document as bulky as this—some 400 pages—within the limited time at my disposal, the House would not expect me to do other than touch on the broad themes.

The first message is that public spending is under control. In this year, 1985-86, we expect it to be lower in real terms, even after allowing for the effects of the coal strike, compared with 1984-85. The remorseless growth in public spending has been stopped. The White Paper shows that for the three years ahead spending in real terms is expected to remain broadly stable at around this level. As a result, during the period of the plans, public spending as a percentage of national income will fall, and that applies however the proceeds from privatisation are treated. Let me say to the House that I am well aware, of the immense difficulties in consistently implementing a prudent and sensible expenditure policy, and I am not so naive as to believe that simply wishing it makes it so.

Secondly, within this overall objective some deliberate choices have been made to increase spending now compared with the last White Paper—in other words, additional sums compared to what we spent a year ago. The priorities I would single out are employment measures —first announced in last year's Budget—and increased spending as a result of the public expenditure survey round on the Health Service, on roads and on renovation of public sector housing.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend add to his priorities important research and development upon which the whole future of this country will depend? If we do not keep up our basic science funding, especially in the universities, we shall never keep up with our competitors abroad.

Mr. MacGregor: I was singling out the main priorities. We have increased expenditure on research and science spending in the universities this year compared to last year. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that if one makes international comparisons then one of the main features of this country has been the low level of research and development spending by industry. There is also the pull through from basic research, often publicly funded, into products and processes in the manufacturing industries which can be sold. It is to those sectors that we need to devote as much attention.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Has the right hon. Gentleman seen the annual report of the Medical Research Council, which talks in its foreword of the severely damaging effect of the financial situation on medical research? Will he pay special attention to that?

Mr. MacGregor: I have not seen that annual report. We look at these matters from year to year. I was involved in the agricultural research spending sector, where we have reduced the amount of money by comparatively modest sums. Many sensible decisions can be taken on that basis by changing priorities to ensure that we can get value for money from research.

I have another point about the broad theme of this year's White Paper. A feature of it — building on improvements in recent years — is the extent to which, throughout its pages, and especially in the departmental programmes in volume 2, large numbers of examples are given of better value for money, achieving more in terms of output of goods and services for the same amounts of money as before. We are talking of huge programmes and huge sums of money, although to listen to Opposition Members one would not always think so. The emphasis on getting better value for money and better output for the same amount of money going is of particular importance. We are determined to go on getting value for the money that we spend on behalf of other people. We are always conscious of the fact that the Government are not a spender in their own right but the trustee for the money raised from families and business.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): My right hon. Friend said that revenue determines expenditure. There has been a significant drop in oil prices and therefore a large drop in oil revenues, which has happened since the public expenditure White Paper was prepared. If revenue determines expenditure, does this fact not make the White Paper out of date and should we not be reviewing our public revenue and expenditure targets?

Mr. MacGregor: I shall be making one or two comments later in my speech about progress on the public expenditure front for expenditure for this year. My hon. Friend will know that the overall statement about the economy is one for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor in his Budget statement, and I am sure that he will not expect me to say anything in advance of that. The principles of responsible budgeting, of careful choices of priorities and of better value for money are the hallmarks of this White Paper.

I move on to the report of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, which will also enable me to touch on a number of other important matters in this White Paper. Not long after I entered this House, I became a member of this Committee's predecessor, the general Sub-Committee of the Expenditure Committee, and found it a most rewarding Committee on which to serve. I have always been greatly interested in its work and in the major contributions that it has made to previous expenditure debates and to the improvement of the White Paper itself, and this year is no exception. I know the pressures under which the Committee has to work, although I hope that the fact that we have been able to bring out the White Paper earlier this year than for many years — indeed I am tempted to say almost as early as I think it may now be possible to achieve it—has helped the Committee in its own work.

I am grateful to the Committee for the welcome that it has given to the further presentational improvements in this year's document. Without question, the document has been becoming more informative, easier to follow, and more linked in with the other parts of the public expenditure process over the years. This is in large measure due to the constructive dialogue which my predecessors and my officials have had with the Committee, and I assure the members of the Committee, and the House, that a great deal of effort goes into responding constructively to its helpful suggestions.

This year, apart from straightforward presentational improvements, there are three particular points to which I draw attention. The first is the shift to analysing spending chiefly by Department rather than by programmes. The second is making it easier for the House to relate material in the White Paper to the figures in the Supply Estimates for 1986-87 to be presented on Budget day. The third is the increased emphasis on the description of what public spending is achieving, rather than just setting out the resources being used. So I am grateful to the Committee, and in particular to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, (Mr. Higgins), for its bouquets. The barbs of course I expected, and they too are there. Perhaps I can now respond to them.

The Committee has cast some doubt on the credibility of the aggregate planning totals. This is a crucial point, not just for those who follow these matters in the House, but for many interested bodies outside, and I shall deal directly with it.

The first point of which the House will want to be aware is my estimate that in the current financial year we remain firmly on course for achieving the planning totals set at the time of last year's Budget. There have been substantial upward pressures on spending to absorb, such as the continuing cost of the coal strike, higher local authority expenditure and the cost of the last social security uprating. Although it is still too soon to be certain, all the signs available to me show that we have been able to meet these pressures within the reserve that we have set aside for such unforeseen contingencies, and that the outturn will be within the planning total that we set at the time of the last Budget. That is one point to give credibility.

Next, in 1985-86, considerable amounts have had to be shifted from the reserve to social security, export credit and agricultural programmes to take account of the change in economic factors—the inflation blip in the context of the first, higher interest rates for existing export credit facilities in the second and the big increases in agriculture

support intervention costs arising from the operation of the CAP and the record cereal harvest of 1984. In this White Paper, for 1986-87 we have taken account of the effects of these directly in the programmes themselves, and they have involved large additions to them. This means, I hope, that we have already anticipated what last year were adverse movements in economic and other assumptions. Therefore, we should not have to meet such additions from the reserve in the coming year. That is another reason for credibility.

Moreover, the House will note that the reserves for the next three years are higher than in any previous White Paper. That of itself seems to concern the Committee, which says that it involves

"a significant diminution in the value of the White Paper as a guide to government intentions",

by which I suppose that it means that more should have been transferred from reserves into programmes.

It would be so much easier in one sense if we could have a precise planning process unclouded by uncertainties in the three years ahead. But that is not the world in which we live, and the Government are not unique in having to grapple with this problem. Any business in drawing up its corporate plan on the spending side must make sufficient allowances for uncertainties too. I would have thought that the fact that we have larger reserves than before in this White Paper is not a failing, as the Committee seems to imply, but rater a virtue, and I believe that it lends greater strength to its credibility.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): Many of us saw that comment by the Committee and were impressed by it. If the Government have public expenditure under control, one would assume that the reserves can be allowed to fall, not to rise. We are faced with an unattributed reserve that should be allocated to the programme if the Minister is as successful as he says that he is.

Mr. MacGregor: I believe in prudence. There is also the problem about local authority spending in the past two years, which I have discussed with the Committee, although I do not want to go into detail now. The overall point is that the fact that we have managed to keep the planning totals where they are and still have high reserves is a sign that we are pursuing a prudent and sensible public expenditure policy.

In its meeting with me and in its report, the Committee devoted a good deal of attention yet again to how, within the planning totals, relative priorities are set. The Opposition amendment also refers to this. I shall give a few reflections on this subject, as a relative newcomer to the inside, as it were.

I agree entirely with the Committee that this is a key issue, because a clear view of priorities and the willingness to make the hard choices involved are at the heart of public expenditure control. The Labour party's approach to priorities is that of "Animal Farm" — all priorities are equal but some are more equal than others. I am not even sure about some being more equal than others. Every spending idea seems to be a priority. That, of course, is how it lands itself with a bill of a further £24 billion.

I should like to turn to some of the specific criticisms made by the Committee. First, it is argued that the process of setting priorities is too bilateral — I suppose that means between me and the spending Minister—and that no overview at any stage is taken between Departments. That is not so. As several charts in the White Paper make clear, there have been substantial variations in the relative position of different programmes over the years. Some have grown substantially in real terms, others have declined in real terms. If the mechanisms were purely bilateral and within Departments, as the Committee fears, this would not have happened.

I should like to refer to chart 1-11 on page 20 of volume I. This shows that between 1978-79 and the end of this White Paper, 1988-89, there have been quite significant variations between different programmes. In the interests of making progress, I will not read them all out, but chart 1-11 demonstrates that when one takes into account the sums involved these changing percentages reflect substantial shifts in priorities.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): I am not sure that what my right hon. Friend is saying is logically correct. It would have been quite possible for priorities to vary between different programmes when the entire process was done by bilateral agreement, depending on what pressure the Chief Secretary of the day happened to put on one Department as against another.

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, it would, but that was only my first point and it was made to demonstrate that there has been an overall view of changing priorities.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): The first point was wrong.

Mr. MacGregor: No. It demonstrates in practice that there are substantial shifts in priorities.

It is argued that the public expenditure process is all about changes at the margin and that it should be, to use the jargon, more zero based. For those who are not accustomed to the jargon, which I am sure does not include any hon. Member present, this means looking at each programme anew each year and judging its relative priorities. I grant the Committee that we do not have a full zero based system, but I make two points. First, the Committee makes some mild criticism of the fact that individual Secretaries of State proposing increased expenditure are asked if they can find offsetting savings. Most Secretaries of State are responsible for several billion pounds of expenditure and it is perfectly reasonable, in the first instance, to ask them to consider what adjustment could be made to their own priorities. Second, in a sense this is asking them to do zero basing themselves.

I suspect that the view that the public expenditure round each year is only about changing minor things at the margin arises because of an excessive concentration on the closing stages of the survey. By the time Cabinet meets, normally in November, the options facing it will be limited in scope, but the process starts much further back than that. I am already discovering that it is like the Forth bridge and I am already embarking on the re-painting programme for next year.

Mr. Dalyell: As the hon. Member for the Forth bridge, I can say that it has structural problems.

Mr. MacGregor: I know the Forth bridge extremely well and that was certainly not meant to be an uncomplimentary remark. There is, of course, no ideal system for setting priorities, and if we had an academically or theoretically perfect system it would not work. There are many decisions, some small, some major, to be taken through the year. It just does not all happen in the basic

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public expenditure round. Outside events and changing economic assumptions can have a material effect on plans. Ministers have to make judgments individually, bilaterally and collectively on a range of issues, and have to take into account the many pressures upon them, not least from hon. Members in this House, and to judge what is sensible and acceptable. It is not just in the annual PES round that priorities are set and decisions are made.

Although the Government do not operate a formal zero-based budgeting system of the kind that has been tried abroad, we do ensure that a number of areas of policy are fundamentally reviewed each year. These reviews will ask: is this programme essential, does it have to be carried out in the public sector, has its objectives kept pace with changing circumstances and can these objectives be achieved more economically?

Over the past two years there have been major reviews into virtually every aspect of social security expenditure, accounting for nearly one-third of public expenditure. Those reviews have covered regional policy, urban policy and National Health Service purchasing of drugs, and there have been numerous smaller reviews into other areas of policy. There are few areas which have not been reviewed in recent years. The results of these reviews were discussed collectively so that before decisions are taken in the closing stages of the survey Ministers will be able to form views of the relative merits of different programmes.

I apologise to hon. Members who are not specialist devotees of public expenditure rounds for the time I have given to this subject, but I thought it worth doing so because I know that it greatly and rightly exercises the minds of those who are specialists. As I said at the outset, no system is perfect. I hope that I have said enough to refute the accusation that the Government's decisions are no more than the push and shove of politics, because they reflect a well considered view of priorities. That is why we have been able consciously to raise spending, and considerably in real terms on health, where expenditure is up 20 per cent. in real terms under this Government, on pensions for the increasing number of our elderly, and on strengthening our defence, where spending is up 30 per cent. since 1978. That has now stabilised, however, and the programme will be declining slightly in real terms because we now have the benefits in equipment and in many other ways, including better public sector procurement, to achieve more for the same amount of money. Spending in the fight against crime is up 40 per cent.

We have been able to achieve this by reducing the size of the Civil Service, saving £750 million per year; by cutting our contributions to the European Community; by reducing the subsidies to industry which were of doubtful economic value; by spending less on building council houses, reflecting the overwhelming desire of people to own their own homes and not to have the town hall as their landlord. We have made positive priority decisions. They reflect the right priorities and ones which are in accord with the wishes of the people.

I referred earlier to the increased emphasis in this White Paper on what public spending is achieving. Public expenditure control is as much about achieving more in goods and services for a given unit of taxpayers' money as it is about simply controlling the amount of money going in. We have to look constantly for value for the money we spend on the taxpayers' behalf. This is an unglamorous area in that it does not immediately excite public attention, but at the end of the day it is what matters to the citizen who is the recipient of public services. This White Paper records the substantial progress that has been made. It contains over 1,200 output measures and over 100 forward looking performance targets, and we must aim to do better each year.

We have a number of weapons in our armoury. In central Government, Departments' efficiency scrutinies have brought savings of £300 million a year and multi-departmental reviews have led to targets to save £400 million a year on Government purchasing within two years, and £50 million a year on office accommodation. Within individual Departments we see the results of the emphasis on value for money. In defence, competitive tenders have saved £60 million on the estimated cost of the new RAF trainer, and £100 million on the production contract for the Army's new mechanised combat vehicle. In the Health Service, £150 million of efficiency savings are planned in 1985-86 and more in 1986-87.

We are getting 20 per cent. more roads for the same amount of money as we were getting five years ago. Contracting out of services for central Government and the National Health Service has brought a net saving of £50 million a year.

All these figures sound impressive, but it is when one gets down to what they mean in terms of increased goods or services elsewhere that their true impact becomes clear. The net saving in the reduction in the number of civil servants employed to administer public spending equals the building of 20 new hospitals a year. *[Interruption.]* We are building them. In the last few years there have been 150 hospital building projects and that programme is well up on any programme by the previous Government. The savings in defence amount to more than the cost of a type 23 frigate, of 10 new Harriers or of over 100 new Challenger tanks. Value for money is worth stressing because this is the occasion when we can draw attention to the substantial progress that has been achieved through a lot of hard work.

Capital expenditure is one area to which the Labour Government gave very little priority. Our record compares favourably with that of the Government in which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) served. Under Labour total capital expenditure fell in real terms by 20 per cent. Under this Government, capital expenditure has continued at a substantial level and is currently running at some £21 billion a year. That level has been broadly stable in real terms. There are two priorities to which we have devoted such attention. One is the Health Service. Capital expenditure on the Health Service, to which the right hon. Gentleman referred, fell by 38 per cent. under Labour and has risen by 12 per cent. in real terms under the Conservatives.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): There are fewer beds.

Mr. MacGregor: There are not fewer beds.

Mr. Corbett: There are in the west midlands.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure on roads, capital and current, by local and central Government fell by 36 per cent. gross under Labour and has risen by 10 per cent. in real terms under this Government. By their performance

and record do you judge them. The House should consider the package in our plans and in the White Paper. It should consider the railways, for example. Next year, rail investment is planned to be 9 per cent. up in real terms on this year. Water is up by 4 per cent. in real terms. Trunk roads and motorways are up 5 per cent. in real terms. As for housing renovation, capital expenditure has increased by more than 35 per cent. during the past few years and is expected to rise a further 4 per cent. in real terms next year. I have already referred to the health authorities. That is a record of increases in priority areas of which we can be proud.

Moreover, capital expenditure, as shown in the White Paper, does not tell the whole story about capital expenditure on infrastructure. We ought also to take into account spending on repair and maintenance, which has grown in real terms and now approaches £5 billion a year.

Some commentators, including the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, have looked at the capital spending plans in the White Paper for the period ahead and concluded that the trend is downwards. The Select Committee makes the understandable error of comparing the outturn figures in the White Paper — expenditure incurred—with plans, without making any allowance for future capital spending from the reserve. As we get nearer to the years in question and shift sums from the reserve into specific departmental programmes, capital expenditure will feature in that. It is the outturn figures in the three years ahead that we must consider.

It is also necessary to take into account the fact that, for very good policy reasons, capital expenditure is sometimes switched out of the public into the private sector, and thus reduces the overall public sector figures on that account. I have in mind the continuing impact of our policies to switch provision to the private sector in housing. The figure that ultimately matters is the total capital investment in the economy. Last year, it was at a record level of about £60 billion, with a further increase expected this year.

I have dwelt on the value for money aspects of the White Paper because of the need to spell out its importance, because our record is increasingly an impressive one and because I do not think that the Labour party begins to understand its relevance to managing the public expenditure programme as a whole, just as it does not subscribe to the need for a prudent economic policy. For Labour all that matters is being seen to spend more.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. MacGregor: I am coming to the end of my speech. I have spoken for a long time. The hon. Gentleman will be able to make his speech. Very well; this really must be the last time.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Page 278 of the White Paper refers to the need in Ulster for expenditure to be

"higher than on comparable programmes in Great Britain."

Why do we have these ever-escalating levels of expenditure in Ulster when the level of unemployment in Ulster is no greater than in the northern region, and other parts of the United Kingdom? What is so special about Ulster that it seems to have a very special place in the Government's heart?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot remember every line of the White Paper.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I have told the right hon. Gentleman what it said.

Mr. MacGregor: Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has, but I have not had time to look it up. I think, from memory, that the point is that there is an extra security aspect in those figures. My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will happily deal with that when he winds up.

I can quite understand why the hon. Gentleman wanted to interrupt my flow. All that matters for the Labour party is being seen to spend more—until the chips are down and those who have to pay suddenly wake up. I said last week that we have been calculating the cost of Labour pledges. Leaving out one-off promises and renationalisation, the cost so far is £24 billion extra a year. I was charitable to the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). I conceded that if he ever found himself having to preside over a public spending programme, he would be forced to trim. Indeed, he is beginning to show signs of panic already—like the host at a party who promised everyone a splendid binge but, as the food and drink bill began to mount up, took fright at the hangover that everyone would face the following day and so began to hack away at the wilder commitments that he and his colleagues had made. He cannot get away from the fact that his colleagues, in criticising our spending plans, are constantly promising more. I shall give a few examples. He asked me to do so.

Last summer, the Leader of the Opposition committed a new Labour Government to doubling aid within two or three years of taking office. That is a fine pledge, but even on a conservative assumption of the build up, it amounts to about a further £900 million. I notice how the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) is starting to mutter. Perhaps she will listen to some of these commitments and tell me whether I am right.

At the end of last year, the Opposition's industry spokesman committed himself in *Tribune* to increasing industrial support by at least 50 per cent. He gave no indication of its cost effectiveness. He gave no assessment of how much money was thrown down the drain in unwise industrial support during the time of the Labour Government. That amounts to about a further £1,100 million a year.

The Labour party remains committed to giving a substantial weekly grant to over-16s in full-time education. Does that remain the commitment, or does the right hon. Gentleman disown the "Charter for Youth" of June 1985? If not, the sum is a further £965 million a year.

In the document "Working Together" last year, there was a commitment to a 35-hour week. The cost in the public services alone would be some £3 billion a year. I shudder to think what it would be for the private sector. Has that been abandoned?

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): Answer.

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman will have plenty of time to answer. Labour has also committed itself, at its 1983 party conference, to introducing a minimum wage of two thirds average earnings, costing another £1 billion from the public purse alone. This amounts to a legal obligation on the lower paid to price themselves out of work. I wondered whether the right hon. Gentleman might say that a 1983 conference pledge is no longer valid, but

[Mr. MacGregor]

I see that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) repeated the pledge in *Tribune* last week. I know that the right hon. Gentleman has already had to slap down his hon. Friend on one proposal, so perhaps he could say which member of the Opposition Front Bench will win on this one.

There are proposals to phase out independent schools, or have they gone too? That would cost a further £300 million, at a conservative estimate.

That all amounts to several billion pounds extra on the expenditure programme. I give it to the right hon. Gentleman that I am sure that he knows the lunacy of commitments on this scale. He knows the massive crisis of confidence that it would create in the economy, the huge inflation and the destruction of jobs on a scale that would rapidly outdo those that he was trying to build up. If he is to sound at all credible, he has to get some grip on his colleagues. The Opposition Front Bench have to come clean and stop pretending that they can undertake so many of these programmes.

The contrast is clear. The Labour party has a programme of massive public spending that would do immense harm to the economy and impose a tax burden on our people that they would find quite insufferable. The 41 per cent. VAT rate that I put to the right hon. Gentleman last week gave him the benefit of many doubts. We, however, have spending programmes that have enabled us to increase substantially in real terms the right priorities. They have contained the overall programme within what the nation can afford and contributed to the economic policies that have produced the longest period of sustained growth for many years. The White Paper continues that programme, and I recommend it to the House.

5.19 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move, at the end of the Question to add:

'but deplores that once more the Government's expenditure plans compound the errors of previous years and therefore further increase the prospects for higher unemployment, inhibit investment, inflict additional damage on industry, intensify the severe shortage of adequate housing in many parts of the country and demonstrate the bankruptcy of this Government's economic philosophy which chooses to finance increases in unemployment rather than additional employment opportunities.'.

You were in the Chair, I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and therefore will recall that last Wednesday, in the debate on unemployment, the Chief Secretary categorically promised that he would today, on what he described as the appropriate occasion, answer a question which I put to him directly, and one which the country has asked for six years, that is, why do the Government choose to spend national resources on the cost of keeping men and women unemployed when they could invest the country's wealth in capital programmes which would begin to put Britain back to work and at the same time build desperately needed houses, replace decaying schools, renovate other areas of capital necessity and rebuild our collapsing sewers.

I do not believe that the Chief Secretary even attempted to keep that promise. But he did, refer to another item in the debate last week. In the last passage of his speech—what he no doubt regarded as a peroration — he reproduced the assertion he made eight days ago, that the programme of the Labour party committed that party, when it came into power, as he is right to anticipate, to increase spending by £24 billion.

The Chief Secretary explained last week that careful calculations had been made by the Treasury. He said that their computers and their recording machines were hot with the work that they have been doing. Therefore, taking him at his word, I assumed—for this must be the case if what he told us was true—that the careful calculation was there in the Treasury file waiting to be taken out, photographed and sent to me.

I therefore wrote to the Chief Secretary and asked him for it. After six days of havering, and conversations between his private office and mine, I received late yesterday afternoon a letter which told me that he either could not or would not supply me with the careful calculations he claimed the Treasury had made. Of course, he does not need to, because his work has been done. He has insinuated the unsubstantiated figure into the minds of sympathetic journalists who, naturally enough, parroted it in last week's papers.

I hope that those who have listened to the Chief Secretary this afternoon have managed to keep up with this calculation for, when he returned to the subject today and said that I asked for details and he was therefore going to give them to me, the details which he gave—and he was not at that time in his reticent mood—did not add up to one third of the total to which he claimed the Labour party was committed.

I want to give the Chief Secretary the benefit of the doubt. Let us assume that this piece of paper does exist, and let us assume that the only reason that he did not show it to me, and was not prepared to publish it, was the ridicule which would naturally be his were it to be clear that his assumption was based on the Labour party meeting all the aspirations of its programme in its first year of existence. There is, even so, another problem that the Chief Secretary has to face. After he announced with portentous authority last Thursday that he had carefully calculated Labour's programme and it came to £24 billion, I had to point out to him that on 3 August the chairman of the Conservative party made an equally portentous annoucement that he had costed the Labour programme, and it came to £39 billion. Where did the missing £15 billion go? I will tell the Chief Secretary where it went. Both those figures are an invention intended to do one single job which now characterises all that the Government do. The Government do not like talking about their record or their policies. The Government like to distract attention from what they have done and what they have failed to do on to their scare stories about the Opposition.

Indeed, I must tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it was actually my intention to suggest that the Government would fight the next election on the slogan, "Hold on to nurse for fear of something worse". The Paymaster General actually used that phrase in an answer he gave to the Commons this afternoon. It does show the confidence the Government have in their own performance, and it shows the misunderstanding that the Government have of the British people. When I saw "nurse" on "Panorama" last Monday, it did not seem to me that many people would want to hang on to her.

Mr. MacGregor: The right hon. Gentleman seems unable to read either my reply or his own letter. He implied that, in my reply, I said that I could not give the figures. In fact, I said:

"If you wish, I could go into more detail . . . of the way in which the figure of £24 billion, to which I referred last week, is made up, although I have to say that I was surprised by the implication in your letter that you have not done these calculations for yourself."

I then proceeded to go into detail today. I agree with the right hon. Gentleman that I have not actually given the full £24 billion—I did not want to go on all day—but that will come. What he must tell us is whether the figures that I have given so far are correct.

As to the hon. Gentleman's second point, he claimed in his letter of 13 February that the then chairman of the Conservative party had said that the figures amounted to £50 billion. I am glad to notice that he changed that today because it was £39 billion, and that was based on past spending proposals and excluded such items as renationalisation and other commitments which I have not included in the £24 billion.

Mr. Hattersley: The paper is there, it is in the Treasury, the Chief Secretary has done the work and his machinery is hot from the calculations. Am I therefore to assume that he will put into the Library, or give to me, the piece of paper which adds up to £24 billion? Is he going to do that?

Mr. MacGregor: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell us whether I have been right so far on the policies?

Mr. Hattersley: If the Chief Secretary thinks that he can get away with that, he thinks that he can get away with anything.

There are, in a word, two essential truths in this issue. One is that the Chief Secretary, having made the allegation, is pathetically incapable of substantiating it. The second is that, while Conservative Members may find it convenient to invent stories about the Labour party's spending programme, we do not have to look into the crystal ball to examine the spending programme of the Government. That is a matter of record. Let me describe what that record demonstrates. The truth of the matter——

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South) *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: No, I will not give way. I suppose that I shall give way once or twice in my 40 minutes, and I suspect that it will be to the hon. Gentleman that I give way.

I want to deal now with the spending record of the Government, which is a matter not of speculation but of fact. The spending policy of the Government is to promise cuts in public expenditure, but those cuts never come. If next year's target is to be hit—and that in itself will be a unique episode in the life of this Government—the percentage of gross domestic product which goes to public expenditure will be no less than it was in the year in which the Government were elected.

What the Government do, claiming it to be cuts in public expenditure, is to transfer spending from productive and desirable projects to the financing of various catastrophes that have been created by their own policy. So we spend less in real terms on education, less on the urban programme, less on housing overall — and the Chief Secretary thinks that he is going to fool somebody by plucking one item out of the housing programme and telling us that it has increased — less on industrial support and even less on the fire service. As I propose to demonstrate, we spend far too little on health, about which the Chief Secretary bragged, to keep up with scientific advance and demographic change. At the same time we spend much more on unemployment benefit and on interest charges.

There is at this moment a national consensus in favour of reducing unemployment by increased investment in public sector capital projects, yet the Government propose to cut capital spending by £1·6 billion, and they know that, as a direct result of that, the cost of unemployment is bound to rise.

We need to look carefully at the Government's spending record, because yesterday it was once more demonstrated that every Government statistic is likely to be massaged and manipulated to make it appear more acceptable. No wonder the polls show that 70 per cent. of the electorate believes that we do not have a trustworthy Government. On the Government's admission, public spending is 9 per cent. higher than it was in 1979. In truth, it is 12 per cent. higher, because the £4·75 billion which is to be raised by the sale of British Gas, British Telecom and other assets is, by any honest analysis, a contribution to Government revenue — not, as the Government continually pretend, a public expenditure saving.

Economically, selling assets is no different from selling gilts. In both cases, cash is raised to finance a deficit at the expense of long-term income. In the case of gilts, interest must be paid. In the case of asset sales, income is lost. Indeed, selling gilts is probably a more prudent method of financing Government expenditure if, as has been the case with the Government, the assets are sold at well below their real value.

I make my position on public expenditure levels absolutely clear. I believe that they should be increased. I am not alone in that. I quote a letter which I received yesterday which stated:

"80 per cent. of respondents to the . . . consultation said that public expenditure on roads, railways, hospitals, housing etc should be increased in the 1986 Budget.

Moreover, nearly all were prepared to forgo cuts in personal taxation to allow for the greater spending on infrastructure."

That letter was not from a constituency Labour party or the TUC; it was from the British Institutute of Management, representing the views of British management. Its complaint against the Government is like mine — the Government attempt to cut spending year after year and fail year after year and, in the process of failing, damage the economy and undermine social services.

The Government's management of public expenditure is as incompetent as their public expenditure policy is misconceived. It is typified by a plaintive paragraph from the report by the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which states:

"it is not altogether clear how far the totals represent what the Government hopes will happen as opposed to what it expects the most likely outcome to be."

Too often, the Government have the wrong objective. Too often, they pursue their objectives incompetently. The combination of misjudgment and mismanagement means that desirable programmes are cut while undesirable costs, such as unemployment benefit and debt charges, are increased.

Sir William Clark *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I think that I should give way to the hon. Gentleman in case something terrible happens.

Sir William Clark: The right hon. Gentleman did not give way when he was making the point about which I am concerned. Many of us are confused. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has said that the Labour party's programme would cost £24 billion. I am not arguing about whether it is £24 billion. I should have thought that, if the Labour party put forward a proposition to increase public expenditure, we have a right to know what it will cost. If it will not cost £24 billion extra, how much will it cost?

Mr. Hattersley: I take that point and I shall respond to it exactly. I said at the time of the last Budget that I believed that there should be a net increase in spending of £5 billion. When I respond to what the Chancellor says this year, I shall make my own assessment and judgment and shall offer my figure for what the Budget spending pattern should be for the forthcoming year. The idea that I shall take advice on prudence from a Government who have consistently exceeded their spending totals, having been elected to cut spending public expenditure and having increased it year after year, is a pretty bizarre proposition, even from the hon. Member for Croydon, South. He has asked what I believe this year's spending pattern should be. I believe that it should be £5 billion higher than it is now. I shall tell him when the Budget debate begins what the amount should be in the financial year then heralded.

I shall return to the Government's policy, for it is that which we are debating. The net result of the Government's policy is an outturn which, until the Conservative party was elected, most people would have thought was impossible—a simultaneous reduction in public services and an increase in public spending. This year, according to the Chief Secretary at the press conference at which he launched his document, public expenditure is broadly flat. Yet, with public expenditure broadly flat, the Government still cut the education budget by a net £200 million; they still plan over the next two years to cut regional aid and industrial support by 31 per cent.; they still plan to cut local authority spending by 13 per cent.; and they still cut the housing programme by 18·5 per cent. this year and plan a 4 per cent. cut next year.

I want to ask the Chief Secretary specific questions about those individual programmes, most of which he prudently chose not to mention. My first point is not so much a question as a plea. I hope that we can be spared more fantasies about how the Health Service has improved. Of course, Health Service spending has increased but in many areas the service has deteriorated tragically. The Chief Secretary is right to say that, allowing for the normal correction for inflation, Health Service spending during the past six years has increased by 20 per cent. Part of that increase has been financed by patients' contributions through charges which take up 10 per cent., rather than 7 per cent., of the cost.

I agree, before the Chief Secretary tells me, that the important point is not how the money is raised but how it is spent. What the Chief Secretary did not tell us but what he must know is that two thirds of the real increase is absorbed not in improving standards in any way but, first, in meeting the needs of demographic change in an increasing population which is growing older and which, in the Health Service area, has better survival rates and, secondly, in matching the excessive inflation costs which are not reflected in the normal regulator which determines the real increase in spending.

Consequently, the "real" increase, in the proper meaning of that word, in Health Service expenditure since the Conservative party was elected is rather less than 1 per cent. Therefore, the funds available to the Health Service are not sufficiently large to allow it to develop and to make common among all our people the new developments in medical treatment and techniques. The hard truth is that people still die because the Health Service cannot provide the necessary equipment to keep them alive. The Government's claim that enormous steps have been made confirms this and underlines and makes us all understand why only 6 per cent. of the population think that we have a caring Administration or a caring Prime Minister.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I shall follow the Chief Secretary's habit in this, if not in my statistical accuracy. I shall tell the truth about the statistics. I shall not give way any more. Hon. Members will then be able to make their contributions.

In the White Paper, the Chief Secretary does not even stipulate a local government spending target—so much for urging town halls to take responsible attitudes and so much for all the suggestions to town halls that they should undertake long-term planning to minimise their costs. How does the Financial Secretary expect councils to make any preparation for financial prudence next year and the year after when they not only do not know how rate support grant is to be distributed, but do not even have the faintest idea of the total RSG?

We know the general trend. We know what the record is. We know what future policy will be—there will be cuts and more cuts in RSG. The result will be deteriorating services and increasing rates, even in Tory-controlled council areas. Once again, the Government's incompetence will have produced the opposite result from that which they intended—to hold down RSG, with all the pains and penalties, or to keep rates down. The net result has been to push rates up.

I shall take another example from the programme about which I should like the Chief Secretary to tell us—the reduced support for industry. I ask him about only one example, although I could give many more and beg the right hon. Gentleman's comments on all of them. How can the Chief Secretary or the Financial Secretary—whoever replies—justify or defend the fact that over the next three years the export credit guarantee scheme is to be cut by 75 per cent.? Would the Financial Secretary regard that as an adequate response to the loss of the Bosphorus bridge contract, a loss which largely came about because the Japanese competition was endorsed, underwritten and supported by more Government assistance than was provided in the United Kingdom?

How does he defend the cut in the education budget? The Minister has chosen to reduce that direct investment in the country's future. I have quoted the reductions for this year. In real terms, education expenditure is to fall by £1 billion between 1983-84 and 1986-87. I fear that that is just further evidence of the contempt in which the public education system is held by the Government.

Meanwhile, I must and do gladly concede that one spending programme has increased consistently over the

past five years. That programme is the cost of unemployment. The total annual bill is now somewhere between £21 billion and £24 billion. I offer the Chief Secretary—who seems to have a penchant for this kind of calculation—an explanation of what that means in terms of taxes. The amount now spent on keeping 3·5 million men and women on the dole and the amount we lose from their being unable to pay taxes or national insurance contributions is equivalent to reducing the basic rate of income tax to 12p in the pound.

There have been two growth industries under this Government — poverty and unemployment. Yet perversely, with unemployment trebled and long-term unemployment now greater than the total number of those unemployed in 1979, the Government reject the one certain way of putting Britain back to work. Capital programmes are being cut, not expanded. Capital spending has been cut by 37 per cent. in the lifetime of the Government. Since Labour's last year in office, expenditure on housing has been cut——

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No. I have made it absolutely clear that I will not give way.

Since Labour's last year in office, housing expenditure has been cut by 59 per cent. and the Government plan further cuts between now and 1989.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: I have already made it quite clear that I will not give way.

If the Chief Secretary wants to be taken seriously, he had better produce better defences for his policy than the one he wheeled out to defend the cut in the housing investment programme. The Chief Secretary said that the housing investment programme has been cut in the recognition that more and more of our people wish to live in private housing. That apology might have some weight if there had been an increase in private housebuilding but private housebuilding has also fallen. To imagine that we would be fooled by the implication that the gap in public housing would be filled by increased private building shows the triviality of the Chief Secretary's approach to these matters.

The Chief Secretary said that more and more people want to live in their own homes. I must tell him that more people want to live in a decent house of any kind and, because of the cuts in the housing investment programme, more and more people are living in slums, in multi-occupation and in housing unfit for human habitation. We could overcome that problem and at the same time re-employ some of the 400,000 construction workers now on the dole. We could reduce homelessness, overcrowding and end the misery of multi-occupation. Yet the Government's condemnation of that is evident in the White Paper. There are 4·6 million local authority houses in need of repair. The cost of repairing them would be £19 billion, yet the Government propose to spend only £2 billion a year on that. In fact, the speed of further deterioration is likely to outstrip the speed with which the present repairs are carried out. That will simply store up more and greater costs for future generations. No commercial undertaking would allow its capital to deteriorate in that way particularly since the resources——

Mr. Fallon *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: —to finance these jobs are available. The Government persist in behaving as if unemployment cost the nation nothing. However, each man and woman who is out of work costs the Exchequer between £6,300 and £7,000 a year. I repeat the question that I asked the Chief Secretary last week, the question I have asked today and the one that the Opposition will continue to ask until we can answer it ourselves when we are in government: why not spend public money on jobs rather than the dole?

Mr. Michael Forsyth *rose*——

Mr. Fallon *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I have been asking questions, yet an aphorism about organ grinders and monkeys comes to mind when I see the two hon. Gentlemen rising.

I know what the Chief Secretary's theoretical answer would be. He says that the public expenditure cuts which he aims for but never quite achieves would liberate economic energy. He believes that such cuts would make tax reductions possible. In fact, public expenditure cuts have generated unemployment and promoted other forms of public expenditure. Far from having tax cuts, we have seen the annual tax bill increase by £29 billion. I must tell Conservative Members that, after the Budget, in which no doubt tax cuts will figure, the vast and overwhelming majority of families will still be paying more in taxes than they were paying on the day that the Government were elected in 1979.

I said that I had no doubt that tax cuts will come in the Budget and I will now try to justify the feeling of optimism that I have engendered in some desperate Conservative breasts. Last week's gloom, intentionally engendered by the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was just the black propaganda phase of the Lawson cycle. We all know what the Lawson cycle is. It begins each Christmas with bragging and boasting about tax cuts. It is followed each January by a sterling crisis and record high interest rates. It then moves quickly through its next phase. First, critics question the Chancellor's judgment, the Chancellor then abuses the critics and the critics are then proved right. Finally, attempts are made to revive the Government's standing by predicting catastrophe in the hope that when it turns out to be only failure everybody thinks that everything has turned out right in the end.

That is a dishonest as well as an incompetent way of governing the finances of the country. In short, that is typical of the Government and that is why the Opposition will vote against them tonight.

5.48 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Clearly this debate should be among the most important in the annual parliamentary cycle, dealing as it does with the allocation of the entire resources of the Government. It is true that the presentation of this year's White Paper, which is significantly improved, provides a better basis than ever before for the House to discuss these vital matters. I should like to express my appreciation of the way in which the Government have responded to recommendations of the Treasury Select Committee as far as the presentation of the accounts and the diagrams in the White Paper are concerned. There is obviously a problem about how much bigger the White Paper should get in terms of the amount

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of detail it contains. Nonetheless, it now provides a reasonable foundation for the House to discuss these issues.

Having said that, we should recognise that this debate has never been a very satisfactory parliamentary occasion. It was rather worse when it used to be a two-day debate. It may be worth while to spend a few moments analysing why that should be. First, the fact that there is a vote at the end of the proceedings is irrelevant to any subsequent events, as was demonstrated clearly when the previous Labour Government lost the vote on the public expenditure White Paper and nothing happened in consequence. That does not greatly help one's interest in the proceedings in relation to determining an outcome.

The second reason why this occasion tends to be unsatisfactory is that it is very much a post mortem on decisions already taken in the previous public expenditure round. We ought to be able to deal with these matters more efficiently. That brings me to the third problem. There is great pressure on the House, particularly from the Opposition, to debate the White Paper soon after its publication. That has considerable disadvantages, because it means that the Treasury Select Committee is under considerable pressure to produce a report at short notice. It also means that other Select Committees, which might now usefully study the considerable amount of detail that appears in the document, do not have the opportunity to do so in time for the debate.

The next reason why it is rather unsatisfactory is that the autumn statement contains a great deal more information over a period of years than was previously the case. The emphasis has tended to move towards the debates on the autumn statement and the Budget, which means that this debate, for the reasons that I have given, tends to become a much more technical exercise. That being so, the Committee carefully studied the position and has given a clear recommendation at the beginning of its report that the timing of the debate is wrong.

The correct time, following publication of the White Paper, for those matters to be debated is May or June, when the next round of public expenditure decisions are just going to Ministers. The House can then express a view of what it believes the public expenditure priorities should be.

I hope that it will be possible to persuade both sides of the House that such a change in our parliamentary timetable would be a significant improvement. We do not have much opportunity to debate economic affairs in June or July. I hope, therefore, that the Opposition and Government Back Benchers will agree that that would improve the overall way in which the House and the Committees can monitor what the Treasury is doing.

That brings me to the priorities, which were dealt with at some length in the report to which the Chief Secretary referred. We spent a large chunk of our report questioning the machinery by which priorities are determined. That gave us considerable cause for concern. We picked out three examples of the way in which that is seen not to be working properly. Last year, for example, there was a problem over student grants. The Department of Education and Science was then told that it had to find savings elsewhere within its own budget.

We had another case with regard to overseas aid. The Foreign Office had again to find offsetting savings within its own budget. There has clearly been a decision that the Department of the Environment should apply more money to the inner city problem—something which I am sure is correct, but it is being done at the expense of the shire counties, again because the Treasury insisted that the additional resources needed to meet unexpected expenditure must be found within the same Department.

I and the Committee do not believe that that is a sensible way of proceeding. If one is going to allocate resources in the light of some new demand upon them, priorities should be reassessed, not merely within the Department involved but across departmental boundaries.

That brings me to a point which the Chief Secretary mentioned—whether negotiations should take place, to the extent that they do, bilaterally. It is possible to reallocate priorities on that basis, because the Chief Secretary puts more pressure on one Department than another. We then have some reallocation of reserves. It does not seem that the Cabinet as a whole considers the overall picture when determining which item should be given greater priority and which less.

The whole pattern of expenditure has a tremendous momentum of its own. It can only be adjusted comparatively slightly, but, nonetheless, all the priorities should be reassessed in the course of the annual expenditure round.

There was an interesting article in the *Financial Times* today which claims that in future there will not be proposals for increases and additional expenditure during the course of the round. The Chief Secretary did not comment on that. I do not know whether the Financial Secretary will when he replies. The thrust of the argument in the article, if it is valid, is that the savings will be found within the Department rather than resources being allocated afresh across Departments if there is an increased claim in one area. It is only with regard to the overall picture that one should say that we should find offsetting savings if more expenditure is incurred elsewhere. To prevent a position where priorities are assessed across Departments seems to lead to a serious misallocation of resources over time.

I hope that the Chief Secretary, whom I congratulate on his new job and who will bring his personal approach to the problem, will carefully appraise the way in which the machinery is operating. I am far from sure that it would be to the Treasury's detriment if something along those lines is done.

I should pick up one point made by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley). He seems to be under the impression that the Government's and the Treasury's present plans are to cut public expenditure. That was the original intention. I believe that I should be right in saying that that intention has now been modified and that the present intention is to control rather than to reduce public expenditure.

Another important point in the Chief Secretary's speech is that he continues to assert that finance—revenue if one prefers it—determines expenditure, not the other way about. The Treasury Select Committee has had considerable doubts about that. My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) intervened in the Chief Secretary's speech and questioned him on that point. If that is indeed the case, we must carefully consider what the effect of the oil price fall and the consequent reduction

in available resources is. Clearly, it alters—if what the Government say is true—the amount of money we have available to spend.

In response to the intervention, the Chief Secretary said that it would all be sorted out in the Budget. I suspect that the logic of that is a little shaky, to say the least. Either finance determines expenditure, in which case the way in which it is raised is irrelevant because it is a constant, or we must adjust for changes in the economic environment. I believe that that is a false argument, because I do not believe that in government finance determines expenditure. The reality is that the expenditure pattern is fixed and the revenue is then produced to finance it. I am puzzled about why the Government should have got themselves into that argument.

Some other important points arise from the White Paper which I should like to mention briefly. I am worried about one aspect of the presentation. A summary of the main points at the beginning of volume I of the White Paper points out where expenditure has increased. It should perhaps also include some reference to where it has been reduced.

The reserves are of considerable interest. Our report deals with them in paragraph 30. We found more and more in the course of questioning that, whenever there was an unanswered question, the answer was that it would all be found in the reserves. The Chief Secretary did not explain why apparently the uncertainty is becoming greater and greater and so bigger and bigger reserves are needed.

That tends to undermine the White Paper's purpose, which is supposed to be to show where the resources are likely to be allocated. We must have some reserves, but it is far from clear why they have to become bigger and bigger, except that we find that local authority expenditure is based on a straightforward assumption without any genuine attempt to appraise likely expenditure over the planned period.

In those two respects — the reserves and local authority aspects of the White Paper — the House is being given less information than it was before.

I do not wish to go into the subject of privatisation and how the proceeds should be treated. The Committee has dealt with that issue at considerable length on a number of occasions. I merely wish to point out that the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook changed his ground halfway through. We can consider the proceeds as reductions in public expenditure, as revenue or as a means of funding the public sector borrowing requirement. He said that they should be treated as revenue but then went on to argue that they should be a means of financing the PSBR. The final view—that they are a means of financing the PSBR—is correct.

I want to deal with the matter of infrastructure and tax cuts. I think that the argument is becoming absurdly black and white. It is a matter not of whether we have one or the other but what priority we give to them, whether a particular tax cut is more beneficial in relation to unemployment as against a particular item of public expenditure. One has to assess the priorities, but the issue has now become very black and white. The Opposition say more should be spent on infrastructure and Conservative Members are accused of wanting only tax cuts. We have to have a balance. In fact, that is what we have—a considerable amount is being spent on infrastructure and at the same time there is a tax policy related to that.

The final paragraph of the Committee's report gives cause for concern. It shows what is happening on capital expenditure or net capital formation in the public sector. We give a table for public expenditure on total fixed capital formation excluding defence which shows a worrying trend, if one looks at it in terms of index numbers, which is perhaps the easiest way of doing it.

Many hon. Members wish to speak and I do not want to detain the House for much longer. Traditionally, this debate has ranged very widely over the whole subject of economic policy and I have to say that the White Paper is based on an underlying assessment about the economy and economic forecasts. I think that we would be foolish to suppose that the current economic position is other than perilous. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has been successful in hitting the right balance between interest rates and exchange rates. It was a close-run thing at the beginning of the year, but ultimately it has not worked out too badly.

However, the position in the United States still gives very grave cause for concern. Today we heard various statements by the chairman of the Federal Reserve, Mr. Paul Volcker, which appeared to be in conflict with some of the remarks made by the Treasury Secretary, Mr. Baker. The American budget deficit gives grave cause for concern. It has not been significantly reduced and it still imperils the world economy and there is the risk of a so-called hard landing in which the dollar collapses. We would then find high interest rates and a world recession. That development could seriously jeopardise the plans in the White Paper. Therefore, I believe that the Chancellor should do everything possible to resolve that.

The so-called Group of Five solution, which in the end turned out to be a group of two—Japan and the United States of America—has been successful in producing a considerable decline in the value of the dollar. That has been done on the basis of intervention and on threats on intervention, and the underlying position still remains very dangerous. I think that the Chancellor should consider that in his negotiations with the Group of Five.

Unless we deal with that problem, and it cannot continue indefinitely unresolved, the basis of the figures in the White Paper, complex and detailed as they are, is in jeopardy. Nonetheless, I think we should be grateful for the way in which the Government have responded to the Committee's report, certainly the improvement in presentation. I believe that we are in a much better position to debate the issues now than previously, but I hope that in future this debate will take place in June rather than at this time of the year.

6.3 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) because it gives me the annual opportunity to congratulate him and the Treasury and Civil Service Committee on providing what is becoming ever more important to our debates—its own report upon the Government's expenditure plans. I was particularly pleased to see the serious, full and thorough way in which the Chief Secretary to the Treasury dealt with it. We are all grateful to him for attaching the importance to the report which I always thought it had.

I heard the comments of the right hon. Member for Worthing about the timing of the debate. I am not sure that the timing will make much difference. He will know my

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annual plea for all the Select Committees to involve themselves in the total expenditures in the areas in which they have interests and he will know their flat denial and lack of interest year after year. I am not sure that changing the date will do very much.

I was particularly interested in the comments on priority. That is an important aspect of the White Paper and it deals with it in a way that no other White Paper has. It obviously largely stems from the valuable memorandum by Mr. Christopher Johnson, who is the specialist adviser to the Committee. Paragraphs 13 to 23, a large part of the report, deal with the determination of priorities. It is not an easy subject but I am grateful that the Committee has tackled it.

Paragraph 23 deals with one aspect of priority. It is talking about the programmes which are increased:

"The principal increased allocations in the current year's White Paper are . . . 'employment and training measures, the health service, capital spending on roads . . . renovation of local authority housing . . . higher costs of existing policies on social security, agricultural support and export credit.'"

The Chief Secretary made a great deal of many of those matters but he did not say anything about the fact that paragraph 23 points out that there is no comment on the reductions.

The Chief Secretary told us about the increases but we have to read the report from the Committee to learn about the reductions. The Committee concluded that an analysis of this kind, together with an explanation of the underlying policy and other considerations, ought to be produced. The report goes on, in the work of its specialist adviser, to deal with those reductions. It deals with the spending cuts which are not mentioned, in defence, foreign and Commonwealth affairs, the European Community — I have objection to cuts there — agriculture, interest support, trade and industry, energy and so on. In page after page we see those cuts spelt out, and they are the mirror image of the expenditure increases that the Chief Secretary mentioned. It is becoming more fashionable to talk about expenditure than cuts.

In questioning the Treasury and the Chief Secretary the Committee dealt with priorities in certain programmes. In particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) dealt with the priorities in housing, education, urban programme, prison accommodation, social security and so on. He talked about which of those should have priority and where the priorities lay. That was splendid, but we have to ask why we had to wait for the Committee and my hon. Friend to mention the priorities when we have departmental Select Committees. If they are not interested in seeing money allocated to the areas in which they have a special interest, why should it fall to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee?

We are grateful to the Committee for showing what can be done and how we can bring those matters into the light of day. We can ask the departmental Select Committees only to look at their areas of interest and see whether they will be satisfied with the expenditure of £130 billion and how it affects them. I should have thought that few things were more important or interesting than how much money will be received and where it will be spent. That should interest the departmental Select Committees, and I hope that they will be prompted in that way.

We have seen one example, which I know something about because it was the subject of the Public Accounts Committee report—the way the urban programme was underspent year after year. Little can be more important than spending on our urban problems. The urban programme was underspent in its first year—it is not easy to get these things right—it was underspent in its second year, and the problem grew worse, and it was underspent in its third year when the problem had become even worse. Both the departmental Select Committees and the Treasury should take that lack of control into consideration.

Paragraph 20 of the report deals with savings within Departments rather than from other Departments:

"it seems clear that additional grant for the Inner Cities is to be accommodated by offsetting reductions in rate support grant for the Shire Counties. There was no reappraisal of where savings should be found from other departments."

That is the easiest way for the Chief Secretary to conduct his bilaterals. It is easier to allocate a sum to a Department and ask the Department for its priorities than to bring the matter before the Star Chamber or the Cabinet, and reappraise the amounts that will be obtained from different Departments.

Although I appreciate the point made by the right hon. Member for Worthing, there are difficulties and problems. It is only right that we are aware of them, and we must continue to press for sensible allocations. I hope that the anxiety and interest of the departmental Select Committees will back us up in that. I hope that the time is not too far distant when the Benches will be filled with members of departmental Select Committees, complaining about the lack of expenditure in their particular area. I am glad to see one Select Committee Chairman present, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short). I only wish that she had come prepared to show her anger and frustration at the lack of expenditure on matters which worry her deeply, and that more Select Committee members were present.

I share the scepticism of the right hon. Member for Worthing at the statement year after year that revenue determines expenditure. I doubt whether that is true. If it were true, the collapse in oil prices would certainly determine expenditure. The Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"The overall effects of falling oil prices on output and inflation are expected to be broadly neutral — if anything, slightly beneficial."—[*Offical Report*, 13 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 1084.]

I am not sure whether all hon. Members were convinced by that statement. If anybody can believe that cheap oil benefits us, as an oil producer and exporter, it illustrates only our failure to use oil profitably on behalf of the whole country. Why should the effect of falling oil prices be neutral? It can be neutral only because we have done nothing with the revenue from oil.

I am not a theorist, but I always think of the potato farmer. He has one simple objective—a high price for potatoes. He produces and sells potatoes, and we produce and sell oil. Just as we benefit from world expansion which has resulted from cheaper oil prices, so the potato farmer benefits from the increased prosperity of his customers. Nevertheless, a high price is important. We have an asset which is in great demand, and it should have made us prosperous. It requires extremely able Ministers to use this heaven-sent blessing to impoverish so many British people.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): When the right hon. Gentleman says that we have done nothing with oil

revenues, does he define as nothing investing more than £70 billion overseas and producing an annual income of £8·2 billion each year to the United Kingdom?

Mr. Sheldon: I do not think that it is an advantage to be a rentier or a remittance man for the world in future, and to deny our manufacturing industry what it should have. But the position is even worse than that because sometimes remittance men do not stay in the United Kingdom. Even newspaper proprietors who tell us how we should operate, behave and conduct our affairs live and pay their taxes overseas. Therefore, there is no particular connection between sending all our money overseas and getting it back. Moreover, we lose through industrial decay and decline.

We should have had a policy for oil depletion. Then, when the amount of oil was restricted, we could have discussed it, at least with Norway, and possibly with other countries. The other European countries will be the great beneficiaries of reduced oil prices—much more than we can be. We should have considered the oil question, not with the lumber of dogma, but with a clear understanding of where our interests lay. Obviously, if oil prices fall, there will be advantages in lower inflation, but we could have used higher oil prices to reduce oil taxes, such as the hydrocarbon oil duties, and so could have had cheaper oil for our industries and for other purposes. Our failure to use oil revenues is caused by our failure to understand how they can best be used. Our supreme task is to ensure the prosperity of our people, and oil revenues should have been directed to that aim.

We depend on our manufacturing industry, and we can foresee a considerable reduction in industrial assistance. Regional and general industrial support will plunge from £888 million in 1982-83 to £320 million in 1988-89. We are becoming more dependent on our manufacturing industry, and, after almost contemptuous references to it, we are now hearing new and even kind words of encouragement to it. The trouble is that much of that new-found concern is coming too late. More than one third of the firms in my constituency closed during the first two years of the Government's passion and zeal—one third in the number of firms, and about one third in the number of jobs. That was the direct and immediate consequence of the 17 per cent. interest rate, coupled with the exchange rate of $2·40 to the pound.

The Government are supposed to encourage small firms. Such firms do not have great resources. They could not export at that exchange rate, or stay afloat with those interest rates. They were trapped. They closed their doors and dismissed their workers, whose skills were lost. Those firms included medium-tech companies, highly skilled in engineering, which all countries, whether Japan, Germany or the United States, find of value to their economies. At last, the Government are beginning to understand that they need such firms, and to speak warm, encouraging words to them. But it is four years after the funeral for many such companies.

It is difficult, but not impossible, to help industry, and the easiest thing in the world to damage it and drive it out of business. That is what has happened. The bankruptcy figures and liquidation statistics do not attempt to convey the misery and wretchedness of the owners, the hopelessness of the managers in their middle years, and the unemployment of the workers, whose training, acquired so laboriously, is no longer needed.

Money will be spent on some firms that will get into difficulties. Earlier this week the *Financial Times* leader, which was about what may happen after the big bang in the City, and how public expenditure should not be used for some purposes for which claims are likely to be made, stated:

> "The Government should make it plain that banks and other financial institutions that get into trouble . . . will be treated with exactly as much sympathy as an uncompetitive West Bromwich metal basher, the special pleading of the Bank of England notwithstanding".

The Government have their favourites, including the financial institutions that are just down the road from the House, but the manufacturing industries are far away.

There are political pressures; the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee refers to those political pressures for expenditure. The military bands were mentioned in the Public Accounts Committee. I have nothing against political pressures, but I like to know when they are being applied. We had the humiliation of the permanent secretary speaking about social need and not the political requirements.

I see that the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) is present. I have nothing against the right hon. and learned Gentleman. He is obviously right to fight for his constituency's interest as I will fight for mine.

When there are political considerations, it is only right that they should be justified on the grounds of financial common sense and good housekeeping or that the claim is made openly that they are different matters and discussion can take place on the Floor of the House.

As industrial assistance has declined, there has been a massive rise in the stock market. As the stock market rises, interest in mergers of companies increases considerably. In the rising stock markets, those who have exchanged the long view for immediate profits discover that their share prices are sharply improved, which could be a base for a takeover that makes no industrial sense and about which any Government should be concerned.

The Government seem to be saying that we should forget industrial logic and concentrate on competition. They are rightly in favour of competition, but that is not enough. The trouble about limiting takeovers to mergers that do not reduce competition is that the growth of conglomerates is encouraged. In all our years of changing industrial policy, in which public expenditure has featured strongly, we have learned that no firm exists with such managerial wisdom and experience that it can advance and rejuvenate the industry in which it operates. At a time of a booming stock market it is wise to call a halt to takeovers and mergers and calm down frantic companies by introducing a long period of delay and reflection.

A major aspect of public expenditure and the implications for public expenditure will come from the sale of gas during the next 12 months. We know that the political dogma of denationalisation has changed to the claim that tax cuts are valuable. We have seen a change from dogma to straightforward tax cuts. Public monopolies are being converted into private monopolies. We have seen the selling off of capital assets, which has been called selling off the silver, and we have experienced the difficulties of regulating such monopolies. However, the House has a right to be concerned about the price that we receive for selling off public assets.

Perhaps the Financial Secretary to the Treasury does what I used to do and makes a trip to the City to see the

[Mr. Sheldon]

Government broker. Why do we see the Government broker? The sales of Government gilt-edged stock over the years have amounted to between £4 billion and £10 billion. He makes the visit to ensure that we are selling Government stock at the highest possible price. The margins are extraordinarily fine. We discuss one eighth of one per cent. as a major issue, but it is not as major as £5,000 million.

When we began to sell off Government assets held on the people's behalf at £50 million or £100 million it was not so important. But it is now reaching the level of the sale of Government stock—between £4 billion and £10 billion—and the Government's sale is in the middle of that range. The way in which we devised, with care and consideration, the method to ensure the best possible price must now be matched by the Government to ensure that we get the same best price from the assets that are to be sold.

There is no need for a forced sale. We sell assets like oranges on a Saturday night in Ashton market. At some times of the year we can get a cheap box because they are going off, but our assets are not going off. The Government should take their time and sell them bit by bit as the Government broker does. We should learn from the Government broker. He studies the market, decides how much can be sold and releases them according to the desires and requirements of the market. He disposes of them at the best possible price. If he gets one issue wrong, he has time to correct it on the next and so he learns. We sell our assets at one go. Who makes the money? Who advises the underwriters on the price? The same underwriters that are buying them. The merchant banks are the people who advise and buy. There are also those people overseas who buy and immediately cash in the assets in the City, so we just hand them a nice present.

If those assets held on behalf of our nation are to be sold, we must ensure that they are sold at the best possible price. I urge the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to set in hand a proper review of the way in which our assets are sold in the future.

6.26 pm

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): If the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) will forgive me, I shall not follow his extensive and, I am sure, important arguments, because this is the first time that I have dared to step into this arid atmosphere, this dead sea of parliamentary debate. As the right hon. Member said, I come along with a piece of special pleading for one area that is mentioned in the White Paper—Government spending on the science budget.

I applaud the Government's continued resolve, as expressed in the White Paper, to keep total spending under firm control. I accept that the Government must have priorities. It is intended that provision for employment, for example, is to rise substantially in the period that we are debating tonight. In many areas there have been substantial increases and further increases are forecast. I applaud the Government's resolve to obtain value for money, which is vital in any endeavour, whether in the private or public sector. The Government's initiatives have had a most salutary effect.

Obviously there is constant pressure on the Government. I see my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary nodding his head, knowing that a piece of heavy special pleading is coming. The Government have in their wisdom set aside extra money for the science budget and I congratulate them on it. However, it is a woefully inadequate figure if one considers the challenges that face British science and technology in the highly advanced and competitive world in which we live. I appreciate the Government's view that within the resources available their aim is to maintain and enhance the strength and quality of the British science base. This year the Government are adding £15 million to the amount originally stated in the White Paper. That is a welcome and valuable increase, but it is not enough to cope with the real problems with which we must deal.

In reply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, the Advisory Board for the Research Councils' report in June stated:

> "Over the last five years the Government has reduced the level of investment . . . (in scientists and their research) . . . in real terms—against the trend in other developed countries. The economic and social effects on the UK of this may not become obvious for a few more years. However, we should warn the Government that when they do they are likely to be grave and effectively irreversible."

Of course the hardest decisions of all on public spending are those where there is so much that is right on each side of the argument and where there are so many competing considerations, but it has always seemed to me that common sense is the only real solution to the country's problems. Common sense dictates that we must make a further substantial increase in the amount of money that we put into the science budget. In scientific and technological terms, where we are behind we must catch up, and where we are in the lead we must continue to hold on to a very tenuous lead. That is the task that befalls the scientific and technological community in this country, but it cannot do it without a substantial Government commitment in terms of both aid and money.

Industry has accepted the priorities that this Government have consistently made plain: the control of inflation, the need to improve competitiveness and the need to increase incentives. I know that they understand that this strategy is a solid foundation for jobs and prosperity, but there is a further and most important foundation to the jobs of the future,: and it is in the harnessing of the opportunities that science and technology increasingly are opening to us and to use them for the creation of jobs.

Never before have there been such luscious scientific fruits for us to pick, to the enormous benefit of all. However, in quality, design and innovation, British companies have until recently lagged seriously behind their international competitors. It is in the area of innovation that we have to do a great deal more, otherwise our situation will not improve. Companies will continue —as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said a few days ago in a debate on the economy —after searching all other markets, to choose foreign capital goods for their investments so as to remain competitive.

The Government make regular and wise incantations about their desire to have a lively, dynamic manufacturing industry. The position is much improved, but we shall not improve our industrial and manufacturing base unless more of our most brilliant people are science-based and

unless more scientists have assistance from the state to develop and explore the opportunities that they know exist but that they are unable to exploit for lack of resources.

If we are to take a bigger share of existing markets, we shall have to challenge the Germans and the Japanese. In order to have a hope of taking them on, we must be able to put a very great deal more into industrial research and at least reach the levels of investment that they make. Putting money into scientific research is one of the finest long-term investments that can be made to cure unemployment. There is a very real role for the Government to play in helping to seek out opportunities and give a lead by showing industry that they are serious about funding a major science budget to assist industry.

I fear that unless we tackle this problem we shall begin to lose out in the highly competitive scientific and technological drive that is fuelling and will continue to fuel the prosperity of other more successful nations. For my part, I see little distinction in a nation that professes to wish to compete in the international, commercial and industrial markets of the world but which is so miserly with its science budget that effectively it cuts off its nose to spite its face. We have the opportunity to create, as partners with industry, the kind of heady atmosphere that senses and feels the possibilities, the opportunities and the vastly increased potential of high-tech world-wide markets.

A critical factor in achieving such confidence is the working together of Government, scientists and industry. However, the Government are making a severe miscalculation. They appear to believe that national strength in basic research is not essential for economic success. However, it is now clearer than the light of common day that all of the new industries are based on technologies that are dependent upon pure science — hence the substantially increased investment in basic research by the Japanese, French and American Governments. The Government's policy is to encourage scientists and technologists of high quality and to underpin such excellence by raising the technological literacy of the nation as a whole. That is a very welcome and splendid aim.

Between 1979 and 1983 the number of students on science and engineering courses rose dramatically. This is an important success. The Government are to be congratulated upon steering people in this direction, but it remains a fact that, because of the adverse climate for science and research, the brain drain is materially affecting our prospects. Why is it that some of our most brilliant and gifted scientists end up by going abroad? I understand from the survey conducted by the Advisory Board for the Research Councils that it feels that more opportunities exist overseas at a time when the chances of research appointments in our universities are very restricted.

Apparently, there are more handsome facilities overseas, in terms of both grant and equipment. Furthermore, there is a deep and increasing frustration with the difficulty of getting research grants in the United Kingdom. There is aggressive recruiting by industry and universities in the United States. There is also, sadly, greater receptiveness abroad to some of our more novel ideas. I find this deeply depressing. It is not just worrying that we are losing a great deal of our young talent; there is also an exodus of some of our older scientists. I understand that some senior scientists have been persuaded to stay in Britain only by the receipt of major equipment grants under the three-year £18 million windfall scheme.

Mr. Dalyell: The hon. Gentleman is making a very important speech, but does he agree that some of the responsibility for this must be laid at the door of the "Minister for Science"? The Prime Minister told Parliament that she is the Minister for Science. Would it not be better for the Prime Minister either to devolve this responsibility to somebody who has more time or to take the job more seriously?

Mr. Soames: I am not here to apportion blame, nor is that the point of what I am saying. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there should be a Ministry for Research and Technology, with a Minister of Cabinet rank in charge of it.

All of this spells a problem for Her Majesty's Government. It is up to them to set the climate for scientific research in this country, as it is set in all the other countries throughout the world with which we compete. Research is far more valued and far better viewed in those countries than it appears to be here.

I draw to the attention of the House the policies in France and Germany. In its policy statement on research the Federal Republic of Germany says:

> "Basic research is the expression and support of the culture of an industrial state, as well as being the foundation of applied research on which the future depends."

The French go a good deal further than that. A report of the French Ministry of Research and Development says:

> "First and foremost it is a question of putting France among the leading ranks of the great technological powers. To guarantee an increase of 4 per cent. per annum (in real terms) of the Government financing of civil research and development during a period of relative economic difficulty demonstrates the Government's recognition of the absolute priority given to research."

What is so particularly distressing about our own position is that this country still has its greatest and most valuable scientific resources. It still has scientists of great ingenuity and skill. They have developed in a tradition of training that our competitors acknowledge to be among the best in the world. However, the problem is that even the most brilliant researcher cannot do research on the leading frontiers of technology without adequate equipment.

If we aspire to remain a nation contributing to the advance of knowledge and a leader in the development of modern technologies, the Government must make a further financial commitment to the science programme. I urge the Government to recognise their responsibility. Our science funding policy reflects the failure to take seriously the grave need to modernise manufacturing industry quickly.

I call for three specific changes, which would greatly benefit the science budget. First, may we redirect at once a handsome proportion of public sector research and development to more commercially productive areas? A good slug should be taken away from the ever greedy hands of the Ministry of Defence. Secondly, may I ask the Chancellor to introduce generous fiscal changes to provide for smaller companies to have the benefit of tax relief on research and development? Thirdly, may I ask the Government to extend the partnership programme for innovation grants and to make it more radical and broader? Sadly in Great Britain today we are wasting excellence, a resource we have in scarce supply. I urge my right hon.

[Mr. Soames]

Friend to recognise that today's Nobel prizewinners were born of yesterday's handsome investment in the 30 years following the war.

6.40 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and hon. Members for the opportunity to make my maiden speech in a very important debate. My predecessor, Jim Nicholson, held the seat of Newry and Armagh until 23 January. It is difficult to lose elections. It is traumatic. I have lost enough to know that. But to lose an election that one has called oneself must be a shattering experience. I say that in no sense of triumph, but because I know what it is to be the loser.

I cannot let the opportunity pass—I regret that they are not here—without paying thanks to the leaders of Unionism who have given me the opportunity to make this speech and to represent the constituency of Newry and Armagh, which I am proud to do.

My record might be deemed dubious. I have been a member of a Northern Ireland legislature and a member of a Republic of Ireland legislature; now I am a member of a British legislature. That sounds impressive except for one point. The first one fell after five months and the second after 10 months; so I am keeping my election posters. I think hon. Members will understand why.

The constituency of Newry and Armagh is probably one of the most historic places in Ireland and certainly very much a microcosm of the problems and contradictions that exist in Northern Ireland. I see the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, who is responsible for economic affairs. I remind him that in Armagh we have the oldest fort in western Europe. Its importance is that it predates religion and Christianity. It predates Britain coming to Ireland. It even predates the Celts coming to Ireland. What are we doing there? We are quarrying in it for limestone. That focal point was the seat of the Irish kings yet with planning permission we are quarrying there for limestone. I ask the Minister of State to refer to that in his deliberations with his colleagues. Can we not preserve something from the heritage that we should all share in Northern Ireland?

Further down the road, not far from where I live, is a place called Dan Winter's cottage where the Orange Order was formed. So there we have the other element of diversity. The theme of civil and religious liberty, as expounded by the Orange Order, was first formulated there. I note each year that the concept of civil and religious liberty has not changed much since the days when the Orange Order was formed.

A few more miles down that road is the ecclesiastical centre of Ireland, not of Northern Ireland or a piece of Ireland but of the whole island. The two cathedrals of the Protestant Church and the Catholic Church look across at each other in the city of Armagh. Just as the bells tolled in the new year I saw the obscenity of two policemen being blown to smithereens. The person who killed them probably thought that he was doing it for religious or political reasons. That shows the contradictions with which we must get to grips.

The right hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Mason) unfairly and unjustly labelled part of my constituency as bandit country. That is part of the island of Ireland, the south Armagh of the poets, of Art McCooey, where there was culture long before it existed elsewhere. That is now occupied by the Army. I shall give a startling statistic. For every 3,000 people there is a fortified Army camp in south Armagh. Hon. Members should think about that. That is the problem we have. Hon. Members will understand when I say that it is a microcosm of the whole Northern Ireland problem.

One constant factor in that constituency, as in the whole of Northern Ireland, is the tremendous craving for one thing, peace, not as a sanctimonious word nor a platitude, but as something organic and constructive. I am attracted to one definition of peace, the definition of Spinoza, which says:

"Peace is not an absence of war. It is . . . a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence, justice."

That is very apposite to our position as we deal with the problems that I have to cope with on a daily basis.

Only when people realise the utter obscenity of violence, whether it be paramilitary violence, military violence or institutional violence, will we be able to end the obscenity and remove it from our society. It is only through benevolence and a benevolent approach that we will begin to understand the other fellow's point of view. It is only through benevolence that we will be able to deal with the one certainty that exists in Northern Irish life. The only thing that I am sure of is that, irrespective of a decision by a British Government or an Irish Government or a joint decision by both, the Unionists and the Nationalists will still be living in the north of Ireland.

We have two stark and clear choices. We can live together in generosity and compassion or we can continue to die in bitter disharmony. I ask for the confidence that Spinoza spoke about. Underlying all the problems that face us today is a lack of confidence. I know that I am not supposed to be controversial in this speech but one of the real factors affecting the Unionist community in the north of Ireland is lack of confidence. Why? Is there a leader there who will step away from the pack, who will not threaten, and who will not say, "No, no, no," to everything? Is there a leader who will turn round to his people and say, "I will lead you towards reconciliation, peace and accommodation."?

That confidence must be created, and when it is it will bring self-respect. Unionists will not secure self-respect in this Chamber and Nationalists will not do so in the Dail. They will have self-respect jointly only when they realise that their futures are so closely intertwined that they must create their own dynamic. I ask pointedly and directly of the only representative of the Unionists in the Chamber, the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), is there someone who will take that courageous step?

Justice was the last requisite of Spinoza's definition. Jefferson once said that if justice is sacrificed for security, both are lost. Anyone who has followed events in Northern Ireland will recognise that that is what has happened. Let us consider the Rake's Progress since 1969. The law has been bent, turned and twisted to try to solve a political problem. That is an example of the necessity to examine the issues clearly.

I cannot imagine anyone on either side of the House being happy, content or satisfied with internment without trial, emergency legislation, Diplock courts, supergrass trials, shoot-to-kill policies and a section of the security forces within which the ratio of serious crime is twice that of the general community in Northern Ireland. I refer to the Ulster Defence Regiment. The ratio of serious crime

within that section of the security forces — I repeat myself — is twice that of the ratio within the general community, and we have a violent community.

Can anyone be satisfied with that? Can anyone be happy when he sees the law twisted, bent and manipulated every day of every week? If we want peace, we must base it on justice. If we fail to do that, the result will be a spurious peace which will not last. If peace is not based on justice, it will not withstand the political battle that may come when we seek a solution to the problems.

I welcome the creation of a chance to move forward, which is the first one that we have had since 1973. The House will know that I refer to the Anglo-Irish accord. I do not see it as a solution, but it provides a framework within which we can start to work together to try to create a solution. It would be remiss of me not to express a tribute to those Conservative Members, who may be Unionists by instinct or commitment, who saw the potential of the accord. A tribute should be paid to them because of their courage. A tribute should be paid also to those on the Opposition Benches who, like myself, wanted much more fundamental changes. They had to make a concession. They had to say, "Yes, let us give this a chance and make it work." Similarly, tribute should be paid to the British and Irish Governments, who have taken a courageous step. Time will show the need for that courage.

A previous Prime Minister has had attributed to him the saying that politics is the art of the possible. That saying is true up to a point. However, much more is required if we are to solve the problems of Northern Ireland. As I see it, politics, especially in relation to the continuing problem of Northern Ireland, is the art of creating circumstances within which the seemingly impossible can become possible. If we rely on the Disraeli definition, there is a thin line between pragmatism and expediency.

We need something new. For one thing, we need strong nerves. The storm clouds are gathering. Those who should be sitting in their places in the Chamber and leading are threatening instead. They are threatening the community in my constituency and they are threatening British institutions. They are threatening the very forces within Ireland which are working towards peace. That is not leadership. Courage is needed from the Government and from the Irish Government. The accord will only be as good as what it achieves, nothing more and nothing less. It must narrow the gap between the decisions and deliberations at inter-governmental level that have an effect on people's lives and deaths.

How can the accord improve the economic situation and the life of everyone living in the north of Ireland? If it does not have that effect, I shall be the first to say that it is failing. I shall be the first to argue that it is not doing what it was geared to do. We do not have any luxuries in Newry and Armagh. We do not have the luxuries of courting ideas, people and attitudes. Instead, we are dealing with life and death. I ask that there will be the courage to proceed with an agreement which is new and which has created a framework that can make it possible to create a new future.

We have moved into a new year and we are moving into a new century, and we need something to take us on our way. Are we to move into the new century with a millstone of blood, as it were, hanging around our necks, with a millstone of division and sectarian bickering, with the daily catalogue of threats of violence and death? Or are we to create a new vision for a new century and a new Ireland that will be created by the people of the island of Ireland, on the basis of agreement and reconciliation that will work for a unity of purpose that in itself will create the only real unity that will last within Ireland?

I make no apologies, and never do, for saying that my aim is to create Irish unity by peaceful, democratic, constitutional and political means. I shall create it, if I can, on the Floor of the House, or on the floor of whatever other forum is available to me. I wish to create that unity in such a way that will not cost one drop of blood and will not remove anyone's self-respect for him. I ask the Unionists in the north of Ireland to say for the first time, "Come and build with us. Say yes."

6.58 pm

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): It is a rare privilege for me to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who made a maiden speech of power and eloquence on which I congratulate him. That power and eloquence is not surprising because of his experience of other legislatures. He spoke with fluency, wit, modesty and feeling. I hope that I speak for the whole House when I say that we appreciated the way in which he recalled the history of his constituency and of Northern Ireland and the manner in which he emphasised the qualities and problems of Northern Ireland.

I warmed to the tribute which he paid to his predecessor, Mr. James Nicholson, who in the brief time that he was a Member of this place established himself, I venture to think, as a likeable and charming person who championed the interests of his constituency most vigorously, especially when dealing with agriculture. I am sure that I speak for the whole House when I say that we look forward to the hon. Gentleman's future contributions, which I hope will not be limited to debates on Northern Ireland. I do not know whether I should draw too much of an inference from the fact that he has chosen a public expenditure debate for his maiden speech.

I turn now to the main subject of our debate. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on the mastery he has shown of this complex subject and the skill with which he presented his paper to the House. Volume I of the public expenditure White Paper is glossier and clearer than previously and volume II is more detailed than before. One appreciates the additional information given—I understand that there are something like 1,200 output measures given. That demonstrates the right emphasis which was underscored by my right hon. Friend's speech.

My right hon. Friend has—like all Chief Secretaries —a difficult menu to commend to the House. There will always be legitimate champions of special interests, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who make their cases powerfully. Such special interests are, however, too often detached from the overall figures and it is sometimes difficult to reconcile all the competing cases made in such a debate with the premise with which one starts—the overall figure. I shall deal later with the characteristic contribution of the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley).

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and the other right hon. and hon. Members of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on the work they have done, in the relatively short space of time, in considering the issues in the White Paper. There are one or two points on which I must take

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issue with them. My right hon. Friend the the Member for Worthing has suggested that the appropriate moment for this debate would be May or June. I share with him and other hon. Members the regret that this important debate should be debated in such a thin House. That is not a novel experience for those of us who have participated in these debates. However, I do not reach the same conclusions as my right hon. Friend. If the White Paper were debated in May or June it would be either too early or too late. It would be too late in the sense that the public expenditure White Paper is, and should always be, a counterpart to the Budget. I do not believe that we can have a meaningful debate on Budget measures unless we can relate them to the public expenditure White Paper. If one day of the Budget debate was specifically allocated to a first debate on the public expenditure White Paper we would have a more realistic and more helpful debate on the dimensions of the problems faced by the Chancellor and the Cheif Secretary. It would force those who argue for higher expenditure to suggest which elements of public expenditure they would like to see pruned. It would also force them to state clearly—it has not been done today —how those increases should be financed.

The Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has made this suggestion because it believes it should make a prospective rather than a retrospective contribution to the formation of policy. I quite understand the Select Committee's ambitions in this matter. I am not certain, however, that May or June would be the appropriate moment unless the Select Committee was prepared to state unequivocally what overall figure it would commend to the House. I am not confident that a contribution from other Select Committees—signally lacking this year and in previous years, though I understand the difficulties—would be helpful unless they were prepared, in the aggregate, to limit their claims to the overall figure that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee was prepared to commend to the House. I believe that is a far more difficult exercise than my right hon. Friend would care to admit.

It would perhaps force out into the open—one of the difficulties or the weaknesses that underly the Select Committee system when transplanted to the Westminster scene—the party differences that cannot be entirely submerged in the debates in Select Committees. The Select Committee has considered how priorities should be determined. The Select Committee has encouraged the Cabinet to take an overall view and has suggested that the current procedures and methods are inadequate. I am not confident that, at the end of the day, it would be possible to devise some formal machinery that would meet this charge—a charge also made last year in the report of the Select Committee.

My experience is that the priorities of a Government are broadly known to their members. This knowledge colours the debate in Cabinet on the overall figure and the first attempts at allocation between the various Departments. It colours the debates of the Star Chamber—if this useful piece of machinery does become a permanent feature of the Government scene. It colours the various Cabinet debates. In the autumn, the Cabinet has more than one opportunity to consider public expenditure priorities and the totals. It is always possible for a Cabinet to detach itself from the immediate preoccupations and the details of the public expenditure to determine its priorities at some earlier or later period in the year. Such debates tend, however, to be unclear and not over-helpful and can assume real importance only if they are related to actual figures. The only Cabinet that has faced up to the difficulties of determining these questions is the Japanese Cabinet. I understand that that Cabinet goes into permanent session for two or three days. It may reach more satisfactory conclusions, though I shall leave that to those who have a more detailed knowledge of Japanese public expenditure.

The Opposition will recall that No. 10 played a powerful role in broking between the various interests of the last Labour Government, especially when it was necessary to respond to the pressure of the International Monetary Fund. Whether that is the type of intervention and type of machinery that we would wish to see as a permanent feature in the Governmental scene, I leave to others to determine.

Mr. Higgins: I am sure my right hon. and learned Friend will recall from his own experience of international negotiations that it is often possible to say something in English which will take three times as long to say in Japanese.

Mr. Rees: That is a perceptive comment on a different governmental process. I am not certain of the nuances of either the Japanese Government or the Japanese language.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on facing so well the difficulties which, indeed, face all Chief Secretaries. There are now many areas of public expenditure that are not under the control of the Treasury. There are the public expenditure programmes which are demand-led, especially the social security programme and the common agricultural policy programme. We could develop a very interesting debate on how they should be regulated. There is a constant pressure from this Government, as I am sure there was from the last Labour Government, to moderate the demands of the common agricultural policy. The question of the social security programme would probably not command quite the same measure of common agreement across the House. However, the Department responsible for the administration of that programme must bear in mind some overall public expenditure constraint. It cannot be right that a system should be devised that is not subject to any kind of control mid-year, although I am fully aware of the practical difficulties that that would occasion.

Again, other programmes are secured by pledges—I do not necessarily mean partisan pledges given in the heat of election. I have in mind, for example, the programme of the Ministry of Defence for last year, which was subject to the NATO commitment, to which even the previous Labour Administration paid lip service. There are other programmes that will inevitably be partially outside the control of central Government, such as those of local authorities. When all this is added up, the room for manoeuvre of the Chief Secretary is seriously circumscribed, and when there is pressure to reduce public expenditure it falls on a diminished number of ministerial programmes.

The Select Committee criticised the fact that lump sums are allocated by the Treasury to the various Departments, and then it is left to the Department to determine how the lump sums are apportioned between various objectives.

This does not accord with my recollection of the process. The omnipotence that is sometimes, with a certain levity, attributed to the Treasury is not borne out by my experience of this Administration, although my right hon. Friends the Chief Secretary and the Financial Secretary will correct me if the atmosphere has altered a little over the autumnal months. Nor do I believe that that was true of the last Labour Administration.

I do not wish to show any disloyalty for a great Department of State, for which I have great affection and respect, when I say that it is not healthy that the Treasury should be drawn too regularly and in too much detail into the minutiae of departmental spending. It must be concerned where a particular project is of enormous size, or has political implications, perhaps going beyond departmental boundaries, where a decision may carry a continuing liability that may be hard to confine within the figures determined for subsequent years. Therefore, the Select Committee's criticism is not valid.

There are some attractive aspects of the public expenditure White Paper. I commend the emphasis that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary places on efficiency and value for money in his speech. I am delighted that in practically every departmental contribution there is a reference to those objectives. I am also delighted, and rather touched, to find that for two years in succession the Office of Arts and Libraries has recognised, even in its special sector, that there is and should be a public concern with value for money.

All too often in the cruder debates that we have on the economy, and on other subjects, the test of the Government's motives, objectives and sincerity is the amount of cash that they have allocated to particular sectors of governmental activity. This is a rather indifferent test. It is as important to determine the skill and prudence with which those sums will be expended. In every large organisation, in both the public and the private sector, this should be so. I recognise that zero budgeting on an annual basis will be virtually impossible in Government, in view of the statutory responsibilities that Government have to discharge.

I turn to the question of departmental costs. A head count was necessary and the proper approach in 1979 and the years that followed thereafter, but a more sensitive method of control is now right and possible. That is why I fully support my right hon. Friend in the adoption of the running costs approach. This should continue to yield a rich dividend.

The Government, at least since 1983, have set as their objective that public expenditure should remain broadly stable in real terms. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, with whom I have often the pleasure of debating on the subject, became a little carried away with his own rhetoric. The Government will have to balance the legitimate increases in some departmental budgets, but, since 1983, they have not set their targets on cutting the overall figure for public expenditure.

I commend the heroic measures undertaken at the behest of the IMF in the Administration of which the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook was so distinguished an ornament. He is fully entitled to hold that up as an object lesson to my right hon. Friend of what can be achieved, but it was achieved in rather special circumstances against a rather special background that is unlikely to be reproduced in the lifetime of this Government. The right hon. Gentleman made much of the point that perhaps the target has not been hit every year.

Mr. Hattersley: Any year.

Mr. Rees: That depends. I readily concede that there has not been mathematical accuracy in these matters. If the right hon. Gentleman is fair to my right hon. Friend and the Administration, he will admit that the divergence has not been great, except when there have been special circumstances, such as the miners' strike.

Here I come to the rather unusual and extraordinary criticism of the amount of the reserve, no longer called the contingency reserve. I should have thought that it would be a hallmark of prudence and excellent housekeeping that my right hon. Friend followed the practice of last year, although curiously it did not occasion too much comment when the reserve was increased by design in last year's Budget. By that stage, it was possible to calculate with a little more certainty the cost occasioned by the miners' strike.

I feel no shame that the increase in the reserve has been considerable. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary is right to have and maintain a reserve of this dimension. It is right that the further out that one looks, the greater the reserve should be, because the contingencies and uncertainties are greater. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) made the surprisingly cheap point that this demonstrates that public expenditure is not under control. He is making a bad point, because no Government can be totally in control of the course of events. However, they can make a prudent provision against those events. It would be wrong, and a misuse of the reserve, if it were allocated in greater detail to various departmental heads before the start of the year. Of its very nature, the reserve is to meet contingencies and events that cannot reasonably be foreseen and quantified.

I realise that the Government's overall objective is an aspiration that is not necessarily achieved, although I am sure that my right hon. Friends have the good wishes at least of Conservative Members in hoping that it will. It may not sound a heroic objective to keep public expenditure broadly stable in real terms, and it may at times perhaps be a little overcharged to say that it calls for heroic virtues, but it requires a certain dogged persistence and fidelity to the main objective. I am sure that those qualities will be commended, at least by Conservative Members. What has been set for the next three years and what we attempted to achieve over the past three years is and was a firm financial framework within which both public and private sectors can order their affairs. That kind of prudent housekeeping is the firmest possible evidence of the good government that has characterised this Administration.

In conclusion, because it does not require more than a casual but I hope not too dismissive glance, I should like to turn to the speech of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. It was full of his customary vivacity, not to mention bombast, and full of indignation that does not sit all that easily with his naturally genial character.

The right hon. Gentleman advanced a rather curious proposition. When challenged and pressed he said he advocated an increase in public expenditure—I assume for next year, but it may be for every year or the triennium —of £5 billion. If he looks at the public expenditure

[Mr. Rees]

White Paper that includes those three years he will see that there were privatisation proceeds of £4·7 billion. That was criticised by the right hon. Gentleman. Unless he has become a convert to the virtues of privatisation, it means that if he were to halt the process of privatisation he would, in effect, be advocating a net increase in public expenditure of £300 million a year.

I suspect that will strike a rather sombre note with his colleagues. But they and I suspect the House and the world outside do not pay much attention to the right hon. Gentleman's figures. They are more concerned with the tone of his contributions and interventions. He may have been misreported and if that is the case I will give way and apologise to him. In one of his last challenging contributions outside the House the right hon. Gentleman coined the slogan "Cash in on Labour". For a person with experience of government, such a slogan is highly irresponsible because it must give rise to expectations that cannot be met, at least with the kind of resources that any responsible Chancellor will be able to command.

I say diffidently to the right hon. Gentleman that if he ever goes to that desert island where he was so charmingly ensconced a short time ago, he should take with him a framed photograph of Philip Snowden or, if that raises too many sad memories, a framed photograph of Monsieur Jacques Delors, because one of the iron laws of politics, at least in western Europe, is that when the parties of the Left come to power after a long period in opposition they overspend in a quite reckless way for the first two or three or sometimes four years of their Administration. Then they might live to rue the day.

Under a system of elective democracy such as we enjoy there will always be pressure for higher spending, perhaps on laudable objectives, than the resources at the command of any Chancellor will allow. If the Opposition are foolish enough to divide the House, that will only serve to demonstrate once again how weak, how ill-thought-out and how fundamentaly dishonest is their approach to one of the central and continuing problems of government.

7.24 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): It is my pleasure to begin by agreeing with the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) in his congratulations to the new hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) who made a vivid, clear and memorable maiden speech. The whole House will welcome the clear dedication to peace and harmony that he expressed. We look forward to many more contributions of that sort from the hon. Member.

I cannot agree with much of the rest of the speech by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. In his final swipe at the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), he employed a little bit of cheek by criticising the first two years of Administrations. I say that because the first two years of this Administration are still regretted by a vast army of unemployed, people who are out of work because of the catastrophic economic policies pursued during the early years of this Government. Those policies led to a high exchange rate and crippled the manufacturing industries of the midlands and of many other parts of the country in such a way that they have still not recovered.

I had hoped that the right hon. and learned Gentleman might have learnt that the commitment entered into in opposition and the rhetoric of Opposition party conferences are often bad guides to the policies of a Government in their early years. If he looks at the early years of Governments over the past couple of decades he will see how true that is.

In commenting on the White Paper, I want to refer to the subject that formed the major part of the two opening speeches — the aggregate level of public expenditure. The right hon. and learned Gentleman referred to that when he talked about the debate on infrastructure versus tax cuts.

There is an absurd black and white view of public expenditure that does nobody in the House or in the country any good. On the Government side of the House there is a general philosophy that all public expenditure is bad. Hon. Members on the Labour Benches hold an equally absurd view, caricatured in many of the speeches from those Benches and from the Benches in another place, that all public expenditure is good. When talking about the aggregate level of public expenditure it does not help to have as a background those two absurd and simplistic views, because the level of public expenditure in the country cannot be determined as if there was a magic total which is the right total at any one time. The aggregate level of public expenditure needs to be determined by circumstances in the economy and circumstances internationally.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The point made by the hon. Member is a valid one, but surely this is the time for an increase in public expenditure because resources are so under-employed. If he looks at the figures for 1979 to 1984 he will see that those countries with the biggest increases in public expenditure over that period have also had the lowest increase in unemployment.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. I was about to say that, at a time when unemployment is at the unacceptably high level of 3·5 million, and when so much output is being wasted because capacity is lying idle, this is the time that we should be borrowing more to invest in the economy to get the growth and wealth and output that will get people back to work. That does not mean that one would agree with high levels of public expenditure at another time.

We do not know what determines the Government's view. When the Government came to office, in their criticisms of public expenditure they relied heavily upon the argument that the size of the public sector borrowing requirement was the most important indicator in the economic tables. They advanced the view at that time that too high a PSBR led to crowding out and to higher levels of interest rates and growth in the money supply, that that led to inflaton and that it was deeply damaging to the economy.

Most of those arguments seem to have gone by the board, although we are not sure what has replaced them. At the moment it seems that the justification for cutting the level of public spending is that it is too high a percentage of GDP. If we compare our PSBR as a percentage of GDP with that of virtually every other country in the western world we will find that it is extremely low. That is a curious combination of figures. Surely the level of public expenditure cannot be determined purely in relation to

GDP. The size of GDP must also be taken into consideration. West Germany has a substantially higher GDP than Britain, so we must expect the percentage of GDP going on public expenditure there to be rather lower.

Our clearly stated view is that public expenditure should be expanded to increase demand, to get some growth and to get unemployment down.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): Bearing in mind the importance of the debate and the massive number of unemployed people, does my hon. Friend agree that it is disgraceful that only one Labour Member, out of 209, is present in the Chamber? If the Labour party took this issue more seriously and was honestly worried about the problems of unemployment and public expenditure, more Labour Members would have taken the trouble to attend.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: My hon. Friend has referred to a feature that is common to many debates these days. When important subjects such as unemployment are being debated, the Labour party is virtually unrepresented in the House. Only one Labour Member is present, and there are no Labour Members on the Front Bench.

Our amendment outlines our major criticisms of the White Paper. The House will not be surprised to learn that we are critical of the proposed cuts and of the proposed levels of public expenditure on certain programmes which appear in the White Paper. I refer to housing, the urban programme, regional assistance, education and science, support for industrial research and innovation. We are especially critical of the 12·5 per cent. cut in capital expenditure during the period covered by the White Paper.

In each of those areas, we should give a much higher priority to public expenditure than do the Government. They are some of the key areas in which public expenditure could lay the short and long-term foundations for growth in industry, and increases in employment. If we do not lay the foundations in education, science, training and industrial research and innovation, our long-term future as a competitor with, for example, Germany, France and Italy, whose GDP per head of population has now overtaken ours, is extremely bleak.

We want increased expenditure, not the cuts that are outlined in the White Paper. We want an increase in the capital programme, especially in housing, which I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) understands well. The White Paper proposes a substantial cut in housing expenditure, yet increased expenditure could meet a great social need in many of our urban areas. Moreover, such expenditure is labour-intensive and therefore cost-effective in getting people off the dole.

Mr. Alton: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is absurd that some 400,000 building workers are being paid unemployment benefit and social security to stay idle while there are still 500,000 homes without inside sanitation and the public housing stock is falling into disrepair? If the adage that the Prime Minister used at the general election—she is fond of them—about a stitch in time saving nine means anything, it must be nonsense to leave houses to fall into disrepair and to expect them to have a life of 1,000 years. Will they not simply become ruins?

Mr. Wrigglesworth: My hon. Friend is quite right. The Government have been told that many times, but they take little heed. Construction workers and workers in many other sectors of industry are idle and being paid unemployment benefit when they could be working and satisfying the community's needs.

It is absurd to spend so much money on unemployment benefit, as the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said. It is also a dreadful reflection on the Government's record that the contribution of revenues from North sea oil to the balance of payments has not provided the means of expanding the economy much more rapidly. The Government have not used those resources to provide capital investment which we would like.

The plans in the White Paper project a real fall of some £2·6 billion in total public sector capital spending. They are very depressing figures. To restore capital spending to the share that it took of general Government spending in 1980 or 1981 would require an increase of more than £2 billion. However, if one goes further back and compares the figures, the problem is shown to be even deeper. No business man or company director would be happy to set that level or trend of capital expenditure for his company.

Even if one goes back to the end of the 1960s, to the fiscally stringent years when my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was Chancellor of the Exchequer, public sector capital investment, net of depreciation, was 7 per cent. of GDP. Today it has fallen to under 2 per cent. That is a dramatic fall. We can drive around and see the state of public services. We can read the report of the National Economic Development Office on public buildings' need of repair and the need for new buildings. We can see clearly the effects of the decline in capital expenditure, which should be reversed. We are critical of the projections in the White Paper on capital expenditure and we hope that the Government will reverse them.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): Is it not the case that a great deal of expenditure on repairs, particularly on housing repairs, could be met out of revenue, and for housing, out of rent income? One of the difficulties is that councils often choose to keep their rents down rather than to carry out the necessary repairs on a yearly basis.

Mr. Wrigglesworth: Even if that were the case, the dramatic change that has taken place in the figures—their basis has not changed over the years—must worry everybody who wants the country's capital assets to be maintained at a proper level. Any business man, any director of a company, would certainly want to see his assets maintained in that way, and that is not happening today. I hope that the Government will take that point on board, because investment in that sphere can be so productive in terms of jobs.

I and my colleagues would much prefer to see the sort of national accounts for which the Institute of Fiscal Studies and others have been pressing for many years, which distinguish between capital and current spending. As we do not have a balance sheet for the country, we cannot make a clear assessment of the level of capital expenditure and what is required. I hope that the Select Committee, which has done such excellent work, as has already been mentioned, will take this up much more vigorously than it has in the past and press the Treasury to move in that direction.

In the amendment, we have mentioned a number of other areas about which we have anxieties. One is the level

[Mr. Wrigglesworth]

of overseas aid, which I think the whole country would like to see increased. I am very much aware of the high cost of increasing the level of overseas aid to the targets laid down by the United Nations. It would be difficult in current economic circumstances to take one great leap to the 0·7 per cent. of gross domestic product which I think all of us would like to see.

There has been a marginal increase in the level of overseas aid, and I am pleased that the Government have responded to the enormous pressure that has been brought to bear. If one considers the total overseas aid budget, which includes administration, one sees that aid has increased only marginally. We would like it to have increased substantially.

Part of our budget and spending proposals before Christmas contained such an increase in expenditure. We give a high priority to that. As the Band Aid exercise so clearly demonstrated, there is a broad spectrum of opinion in the country and a great deal of good will that wants to see more assistance given much more generously. People are prepared to put their hands in their pockets for such expenditure. They are prepared to put their hands in their pockets for an appeal by Bob Geldof and his friends, as they are if the taxman asks them to do it for that purpose. We believe that the Government would get the backing of a great deal of public opinion if they were prepared to move in that direction.

I acknowledge—this is why I made the remark about not being able to leap to United Nations targets—the difficulty of containing public expenditure. Every Government have found it difficult to do so. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, who gives the impression that magic wands can be waved. It is difficult for any Administration to control public expenditure. I do not think that the Chief Secretary will find it easy to come to the Dispatch Box and cost the alliance's programmes, and come up with the sort of absurd figures which he justifiably gave for Labour's programme of expenditure. We are keeping very close monitoring of our expenditure commitments and, I think, are being as responsible in our commitments as any Opposition could be with the resources availlable.

For that reason, when we published our statements of economic policy for last year, even a newspaper like the *Daily Telegraph* was able to refer to them as model Opposition documents. I therefore hope that the House, and indeed the country, will respond to that desire to be responsible in our proposals. However, we disagree fundamentally with the strategy which the Government outline in the White Paper. We have described in the amendment the areas which we believe should not have been cut. We also believe that it is wrong to restrain the aggregate level of public expenditure to its present level when there is such a desperate need to expand the economy and achieve greater growth so as to get people back to work.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. I remind the House that time is moving on fast, and many hon. Members are hoping to speak in the debate.

7.44 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): First, I take the opportunity to join other hon. Members in praising the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I thought that he spoke with great fluency and sincerity about his constituency and his desire for peace. I am sure that we shall hear many more excellent speeches from him.

I welcome the Chief Secretary's emphasis on value for money in the public sector, and the emphasis which the Government continue to place on returning items from the public to the private sector. The less that Government are involved in these businesses the better it will be for all of us, whether those in the House or people at large in the country.

The introduction of much more widespread competitive tendering is something for which we should continue to press. There is no doubt that lower costs have been achieved, and a greater incentive has been given to people to provide goods and services more effectively and efficiently than has all too often been the case in the past.

Apart from those general points, the Chief Secretary laid emphasis on priority on public spending. In this regard, I wish to express some concerns. I want to direct my comments to spending on higher education and, to a much lesser degree, on scientific research. I might have said slightly more on the subject of scientific research had not such a substantial case been put by the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). My few remarks will be a mere shadow of his, following what he had to say. Therefore, I will pursue the matter of higher education.

Overall the percentage of public expenditure devoted to education and science is expected to fall from 14·3 per cent. to 12·1 per cent. between 1978-79 and 1988-89. I am well aware that falling school rolls have enabled savings to be made, but in higher education the position is not so straightforward. In the last few years the Government have rightly sought savings and improved effectiveness in universities, polytechnics and colleges of higher education. In universities, and to an even greater extent in polytechnics, there have been greater reductions in the number of staff to pupils and the moves in that direction thus far are welcome. In universities the figure has moved in the period 1979 to 1984 from 9·3 to 10·2 students to staff, and in polytechnics from 8·4 to 11·1. I am not convinced, however, that further savings in higher education can be sensibly undertaken.

I want to see a growing proportion of young people pursuing higher education courses. In particular, I want to see an increase in the number of students pursuing some of the more expensive science and engineering courses. I believe that the resources planned for higher education are not sufficient for the country to meet its needs in highly educated and skilled manpower.

Even in the last few years, we have seen a paradox in university education and admissions to universities. There has been success in encouraging young people to pursue courses in mathematics, science and electronic engineering. However, the hurdles to be jumped to pursue such courses at university have been raised substantially. If one examines the A-levels required to pursue such courses, one finds, as one might expect, that law and medicine are two which require high quality entrants. I am pleased at that. One also finds, rather more surprisingly, that, in the next six most difficult courses to pursue in terms of entry

qualifications, one has mathematics, physics, electrical engineering and combined biological and physical sciences. Employers have difficulties in recruiting graduates in these subjects, yet we make it difficult for young people to pursue those subjects at university. Incidentally, it is much easier to obtain the qualifications necessary to pursue university courses in history and sociology, so the Government have certainly not followed a philistine approach.

To be a more successful, competitive nation, we must maximise the potential of able young people. Commerce and industry demand more well-qualified young people. It is essential that higher education should have sufficient resources to meet that challenge. The resources need not come from the public purse. However, I regret that there is insufficient evidence of enough private funding to make me believe that enough public expenditure is allocated. There is still considerable scope for improvements to induce universities and polytechnics to look for more private finance. More imagination is required in joint financing schemes between Government and industry.

I return to the essential point that, if we are to be a competitive nation, so that we are prosperous, we must find the resources to educate and to train people to maximise their effectiveness. If we do that, we shall pull through some of the less able people in lesser skilled jobs. If we do not, this country will suffer in the coming years.

Although the debate is about overall public spending, I am certainly not one of those who want a massive increase in public spending. I believe that in coming years greater emphasis must be placed on higher education than the public expenditure White Paper shows.

7.52 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I wholeheartedly support the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) in what he said about the need to support science. The debate has been remarkable because there have been two speeches on that theme. Two days ago, three or four members of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee had an interesting discussion with the Secretary of State for Education and Science about this matter. I hope that as the hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who was the Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science, is now a Treasury Minister, there will be a voice in the Treasury pressing the need for more support for science.

The Select Committee on Social Services always makes a point of looking at the public expenditure proposals. It always takes oral evidence from the responsible Ministers and produces a report on the proposals in the White Paper. In response to the Select Committee's recommendations several presentational changes have been made in the White Paper. This includes the chapters on DHSS expenditure. We welcome the additional information that has been published in the White Paper.

Despite the successive recommendations by the Select Committee, the White Paper still does not include an analysis of trends in real costs and volume of spending and in the volume of services. The Select Committee intends to take evidence later this Session on the Government's expenditure plans for 1986-87 to 1988-89 and will report in due course.

I support the recommendations of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee on the White Paper. The Committee recommended that next year the White Paper should be deferred until later in the Session to enable other Committees, such as the Select Committee on Social Services, to report to the House. There would then be better informed debate on other aspects of expenditure.

The DHSS spends more than any other Department. In 1985-86, it estimates that it will spend £16·7 billion on health and personal social services and £41·2 billion on social security. The Minister for Health has acknowledged that hospital and community health services will need to grow by 2 per cent. a year to meet the Government's objectives, and this is to be achieved by a mixture of additional expenditure and efficiency. We always talk about improved efficiency.

The public expenditure White Paper states that health authorities are expected, from the total resources available to them, to meet pay and price increases, to meet the needs of the growing number of elderly people and to improve services. They are expected to do a great deal, are they not? The extent to which health authorities can do this will depend crucially on the level of this year's pay settlements and on their ability to make "cost improvements".

One might ask when is a cut in Health Service spending not a cut? The answer is when it is a cost improvement. The public, bemused by departmental gobbledegook, may well think that it means an increase in resources, but it is just the opposite. This gloss does not fool the Select Committee, the medical profession, the Royal College of Nursing, the Institute of Health Service Administrators or other royal colleges, all of which see their problems deepened by the closures, the increasing work load and the general decline in morale stemming from the Government's refusal to face up to the damage they are doing to our most precious asset.

We shall be monitoring the Government's efforts to achieve increased efficiency in hospital services, including the real impact of the Government's policy on competitive tendering and the effects of the Griffiths' recommendations, about which there are disturbing reports from some quarters. The Social Services Select Committee expressed a number of reservations when it looked at the proposals before they were introduced.

In 1981, the Social Services Select Committee recommended changes in the medical staffing patterns in hospitals to improve the quality of care to patients and to relieve the logjam of experienced senior registrars who were unable to obtain promotion. We recommended that there should be an increase in the number of consultant posts and a reduction in training posts. The Government accepted that recommendation, and we were delighted that they did.

In 1985, the Social Services Select Committee again looked at the issue, as it always does, to check what progress has been made, and found that the ratio of consultants to junior doctors had hardly changed. The Government have replied to our follow-up report, agreeing that little has happened and stating:

"there appears therefore to be an impasse".

To resolve the problem, there is to be yet another review of the whole subject by the Government and the joint consultants' committee. The Minister for Health must be aware that there is support for the Committee's proposals among the responsible organisations in the profession, including the royal colleges and an enormous number of professional bodies which are concerned about this.

What will happen if action is not taken soon? I must refer to the warnings and recommendations that the Select

[Mrs. Renée Short]

Committee on Social Services made in its first report on perinatal mortality. In the past five years since the report was published, we should have seen a consistent improvement in all the regions if our advice had been followed. If our advice regarding regional intensive care units had been followed, and units had been established which were well staffed and well equipped to save distressed new-born babies, there could have been improvements. A serious situation is developing in some of the teaching districts in London. I attended a conference across the river at St. Thomas's hospital about the situation in the South-East Thames region and was alarmed at the information supplied.

My own region, the West Midlands region, was one of the very seriously disadvantaged regions when we presented the report. It had a high perinatal mortality rate. However, I read in the local press only five days ago that plans to reduce the number of babies that die at birth in the west midlands are not working.

Some district health authorities could soon have their knuckles rapped unless there is a drop in the infant mortality rate. An article in the *Express and Star* on Wednesday 12 February 1986 stated that the districts causing most concern to the regional health authority are

"Wolverhampton, Dudley, South-East Staffordshire, North Staffordshire, Shropshire, and Coventry, where the number of consultants are way below the RHA guidelines".

Despite all the plans for improvement and despite the health promotion campaigns that have been carried out, the expected improvement in the perinatal mortality rates has not come about. The article continued:

"The report showed that the majority of the 22 health districts in the West Midlands region were suffering from staff shortages in their gynaecology and obstetrics departments. The report also stated:—

'There is scant evidence in district programmes of targeted smoking prevention campaigns, and only seven of the 22 districts short-term programmes contain any plans for the development of ante-natal preparations for pregnancy-planned parenthood services.'"

There has been very little improvement, after five years, in a region that had one of the highest perinatal mortality rates, and that is a very serious situation. I hope that the Minister will consider that something needs to be done in order to provide more resources for the Department to carry out the policies that have been accepted.

In the White Paper, the Government repeat their original estimate that savings of £75 million would arise from the introduction of the limited list. We have noted that in the winter and spring supplementary estimates the cost of drugs has none the less risen considerably during the current year. In the reply to last year's report on the White Paper, the Government undertook to report to Parliament what savings were achieved from the introduction of the limited list. When and how is that information to be made available? Perhaps the Minister will provide that information shortly.

The information about future expenditure on personal social services given in the White Paper is so brief as to be almost meaningless. The level of local authority expenditure on social services will be determined in part by the Government's policy of reducing overall local authority spending. We shall continue to press the Government about the amount of money available for the development of community care, in particular for those transferred from the National Health Service to the care of local authorities. The Government have accepted these policies and yet the resources to carry them out—whether for the care of children or the mentally ill and mentally handicapped in the community—are not being made available.

How much money is available from the sale of land and buildings now belonging to the Health Service to provide bridging funds for the range of homes, workshops, and community facilities that are needed for former patients from mental institutions when they live in the community?

Last week the committee published a report commenting on the Government's proposals for the reform of social security. Very little information has been given by the Government about the public expenditure implications of these proposals. It is estimated that the proposed family credit will cost nearly twice as much as family income supplement costs at present but that will depend on how good is the take up of the new benefit. Given the poor take up of family income supplement and the fact that it is not possible to predict how the change in paying the benefit through the pay packet instead of direct to the mother will affect take up, that estimate can be little more than guesswork at present.

Between 1986 and 1989, the DHSS is planning a huge investment in computers to administer social security benefits. I do not know how much the computers will cost, but the Committee will be keen to see if the Department's expectation of an eventual reduction in the administrative costs of social security is achieved. We do not know if that will happen. In the short term, many additional, temporary DHSS staff will be needed during training in the administration of the new benefit structure. I wonder how much that exercise will cost. The White Paper contains no estimate of the implementation cost of the new benefit structure or of the total cost of changing the dates of benefit uprating. There are many questions that the Select Committee will want to pursue during the course of the Session. We shall want to question Ministers about these matters. I hope that the Minister who replies will be able to answer some of the questions that I have raised.

8.6 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I join many of my hon. Friends in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on the emphasis in his speech today on value for money and efficiency. Often in these debates there is a call to make it clear what the distinction is between public investment and current public expenditure. That call is made every year and just as regularly that call is rejected.

If a public company went to its shareholders every year, without making that important distinction clear in its annual report, its directors would soon be in trouble. That means that outside pressure groups are left to decipher what parts of the White Paper mean a real rise in resources and how they will be properly spread. In turn, that means that outside pressure groups, which are hostile to the Government—by virtue of being pressure groups, they usually are hostile to the Government—are there to place the worst possible public construction on the Government's actions.

The Chief Secretary could claim that he is being benevolent in what he has announced today. I have no doubt that he is benevolent, but he ought not to make and allow such a public relations opportunity to slip by if he

is being benevolent. We all want to see the expansion of public investment, but when that investment is blurred by wage claims, wage costs and current expenditure, which in themselves often conceal unnecessary waste, support for increased expenditure is less warm particularly on Conservative Benches. Those who welcome increased infrastructure spending begin to wonder if the money is actually being spent on the infrastructure.

Under the present system, if cuts have to be made, they can be made easily by cutting public capital programmes. If waste occurs, as happened in the development of the Liverpool Crown court, where there was a slippage of some £36 million, that can be concealed under a global figure, and no one is any the wiser or greatly concerned. If my right hon. Friend wants an increased programme of support for the infrastructure, I urge that in these White Paper statements he should spell that out.

When the Government are making an effort to deal with the matter and, at the same time, create jobs, my right hon. Friend should say so and take the credit for it. To do otherwise, to blur what is being spent and where, is to invite the charge that we are merely throwing money away —as it is said, throwing money at the problem, with the implication that the policies are non-caring and badly thought out and that money is often wasted, which, in the present circumstances, it sometimes is. The charge is sometimes made that the Conservative Government cannot make up their mind whether they want increased public expenditure or less public expenditure.

Politicians are accused of giving evasive answers to questions on that subject. That is often because the wrong questions are asked. Conservative Members are in favour of increased capital spending which is not the same as increased public expenditure. There are essential works to be done in this country. Many of them are being tackled, but the fudge over what is capital and what is current expenditure does not help, as a study commissioned by the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors made clear last July.

I wish to make one other brief but important point, related to the hostility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and presumably his colleagues on the Treasury Bench, towards allowing public utilities to borrow on the open market for their capital expenditure and expansion. It is beyond my comprehension that it somehow screws up my right hon. Friend's total financial strategy if the National Coal Board or water authorities wish to borrow from banks or elsewhere at rates which they believe they and their consumers can afford. The name of the game is, surely, expansion and jobs. If our utilities can achieve that, the Government's goals are achieved. In addition, that relieves the consumer from having to pay for expansion out of current annual charges.

One day someone will tell my right hon. Friend that the emperor genuinely has no clothes. I put that to him recently because the Anglian water authority told me that if it could borrow on the marker it could finance its current capital programme and increase this year's water charges by only 7·5 per cent., whereas if capital expenditure had to come out of the annual water bills, the ratepayer would have an increase of 14·6 per cent.

My right hon. Friend remained unmoved. He told me that it was no cheaper to borrow on the market than from the public works loan fund. I was not arguing about the cheapness of the rates. I was arguing that, like any prudent business, the water authority must be entitled to borrow for future capital expansion instead of passing on large increases in the current year to pay for capital expansion in that current year. If public utilities were not monopoly suppliers, the customers would never stand for it. Water authorities do not want to finance expansion out of revenue, but the Treasury and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor oblige them to do so at present. I urge a rethink on that point. As the advertising hoardings used to say a year or so ago:

"You know it makes sense."

8.15 pm

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): I have gained the impression today that scepticism is felt on the Conservative Benches about the Government's policies. I put the hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) into that category. It would be fair to say that most, if not all, Opposition Members approach the Government's expenditure plans with some trepidation. They hear Ministers speak of cutting public expenditure, holding it steady and so on. The reality has been rather different.

The Government's record shows that our public services have deteriorated. The Government have had little success in reducing overall expenditure and, so far, their promises to cut taxation have been little more than a mirage. It can be said, of course, that hope springs eternal and that there is another Budget on the horizon.

When discussing such matters, I unashamedly reflect on the present plight of Wales. I think of the serious unemployment and the social distress which is a byproduct of that unemployment. I think of our south Wales valleys and the spirit of hopelessness about the future which lies alongside that heavy unemployment.

There has been a deterioration in the social services, including the National Health Service upon which many additional calls are made as a result of social conditions. There is a great deal of substandard housing, yet our local authorities are allowed to spend only 15 per cent. of the revenue that they have obtained from the sale of council houses. An effort should be made to build many more houses. But I do not wish to dwell on the Welsh scene.

On page 9 of volume I of Cmnd. 9702, we see that the Department of the Environment's public spending on housing in 1984-85 is put down as £3·2 billion. That was estimated to drop to £2·7 billion in 1985-86, rising only to £2·9 billion in 1988-89. There is not much more on the horizon. The Government should be heading a housing drive at present. It would improve the environment, put people into decent homes and take a great many people out of the dole queue.

On Monday this week, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) unveiled the Labour party's plan to use £5 billion of local authority receipts from council house and other asset sales to create 750,000 new jobs. It includes investment in housing, roads, sewers, railways, hospitals, schools and industry. What could be more sensible? That plan would help build a more efficient economy and put people back to work.

What is the Government's reaction to those proposals? In the *Daily Telegraph* on 18 February, the Secretary of State for the Environment is quoted as saying that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook was like a pools winner

"with a policy of 'spend, spend, spend'."

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

Surely there is a vast difference between spending money on worthwhile projects and squandering money, as the Government have done so profusely. We should think of the massive revenues that they have received from North sea oil. No other Government in history have received such largesse. Public assets such as British Telecom, the ports and Cable and Wireless have been sold. The sale of British Leyland is on the horizon. There are proposals for the sale of British Gas and even of our water resources.

Vast resources have been simply showered on the Government and all they have to show for it, after nearly seven long years, is mass unemployment. That, for me, is the essential difference between the spending which my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook envisages and squandering our resources which the Government have done on such a massive scale.

Defence expenditure is still going up. According to the document, it went up from £15·5 billion in 1983-84 to £19 billion in 1988-89. During defence questions last week we were told that Trident was costing nearly £10 billion at 1984-85 prices. That amount is for ever escalating, and we have been promised a new figure shortly. The policy of the Labour party is to scrap Trident and to spend the money on more worthwhile projects. We believe that conventional weaponry is sufficient for our defence needs. I believe that money spent on Trident is simply money poured down the drain.

Youth unemployment is a vital issue. Our young people have become known as the lost generation. On Tuesday my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) sought information on the youth training scheme. The answer he received suggested that more than half our Welsh youngsters coming off the YTS last year failed to get a job. With the exception of the north of England, Wales has the worst youth employment record in the United Kingdom. We need to attract new jobs to the north of England, Wales and Scotland. The Government should be in the vanguard of those efforts.

One recognised way of doing that over the years has been the policy of regional aid. Since 1979, regional aid to Wales has fallen by 40 per cent. It is set to plunge further by the end of the decade, despite the fact that Wales has lost 110,000 jobs in manufacturing since 1979. Is it any wonder that our young people have become so alienated from society and that crime statistics are going through the roof?

At Prime Minister's Question Time on Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition accused the Prime Minister of breaking all manner of records:

"record and rising unemployment, record real interest rates, record manufacturing trade deficits and a record tax burden."
—[*Official Report*, 18 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 185.]

In reply, the Prime Minister spoke of what she considered to be her record-breaking achievements. All I can say is that Wales has been on the receiving end and our people are punch-drunk with the effects of those policies. Surely the time has come for a change of course.

8.24 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will be relieved to know that I will not make my special pleading for an increase in expenditure. However, before I begin my remarks I should like to raise a point which I had hoped to make during the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). I was rather surprised that he was advocating a substantial increase in overseas aid when some of my constituents have received a letter from his right hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) telling them what a poor country we are and how our share of world trade has dropped by half between 1980 and 1984. The letter said that we were in the same league as Yugoslavia, Taiwan and Puerto Rico. If that is true, I cannot see how he could justify spending more than the £1 billion we already spend on overseas aid. In fact, we probably could not afford that.

My first reaction on studying the White Paper on public expenditure this year was that hope springs eternal. I am relieved that the Government, in their own words,

"still intend to hold spending broadly level in real terms."

However, I must say that based on past performance I am sceptical as to whether that can be achieved. I think, like other hon. Members of the Select Committee, that it represents what the Government hope will happen rather than what they think will happen. In last year's expenditure White Paper the expenditure for 1985-86 was estimated to be £132·1 billion. This year's White Paper shows that that figure was exceeded by about £2 billion. We have heard from the Chief Secretary that he hopes that there will be no overspend this year. If he keeps to the figures, I think that he will deserve our congratulations.

For 1986-87, last year's White Paper showed that the planning total, less receipts from asset sales, was to be £138·9 billion whereas for the same year in this year's White Paper it amounts to £143·8 billion, an increase of £5 billion. I think that that confirms what many of us have been saying for years, that the relentless increase in departmental spending seems to continue year after year. The full extent of the rise is, to a certain extent, hidden by an increase in asset sales between the two years of £2·5 billion. So much for all the Opposition talk of cuts.

I was pleased to hear the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) admit that there have been no cuts. Across the board there have not been cuts. However, he was less than honest when he talked about cuts in education. In fact, the real expenditure per pupil today is higher than it has ever been in our history. We have more nurses, doctors and more patients being treated, so it is rubbish to talk about cuts. I am saddened that the Government have given up the battle to cut public spending and are now merely aiming to reduce it, as a percentage of GDP. I think that change of policy was forced on the Treasury by the high-spending Ministries. They have undermined a major thrust of Thatcherite economic policy. As a result of that, we have not been able to make the significant reductions in taxation that we had hoped for, particularly for the average wage earner, and we have not been able to bring the standard rate down to 25p in the pound. We have not been able to deal with the "Why work?" problem which has been so ably highlighted over so many years by my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell). If we had been able to keep departmental cash spending down to the figure set out in 1984 White Paper, only two years ago, we would have had an extra £5 billion to dispose of this year. With that money we could have reduced the standard rate by almost 3·5p in the pound which would have put us well on the way to achieving our target of 25p in the pound.

In view of the drop in oil prices which will cost us anything from between £5 billion and £7 billion in lost oil revenue, I believe that the control on spending is even more important. I was sorry that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary did not really deal with the point that I raised in my intervention. If revenue is to determine expenditure, and we have a significant loss of revenue, as we have had, surely we must reconsider our spending plans. In view of those factors, I strongly urge the Government to return to their policy of cutting expenditure.

We have not been as successful as we hoped in controlling expenditure by local authorities, the Department of Health and Social Security, and on debt interest. Local authority spending for 1985-86 turned out to be £2 billion more than was forecast in the 1984 White Paper. That hides some disturbing facts. On the one hand, careful low-spending councils in the districts and shires have reduced spending, or kept it level, while many of the Left-wing-controlled councils in the big cities, such as London, Liverpool, Hull and Sheffield, have increased spending. In some extreme cases, they have spent money as if it was going out of fashion. It is unfair that many careful low-spending councils have had their grants reduced, while profligate inner-city councils have received additional grants to deal with their problems as a result of pressure from the Opposition, the churches, charities and some of my hon. Friends, especially as many of those problems have been self-imposed.

The Government are optimistic that local government spending will fall, as the table in the Select Committee's report shows. I wish that I could be as optimistic as the Government. However, I am delighted that they have decided to grasp the nettle of rate reform. If only our party had dealt with the problem in 1980, as the Prime Minister wanted to, we would not have encountered many of the problems that we have since faced.

Social security spending is £1·7 billion more than was estimated in the 1984 White Paper. In recent years, some aspects of social security spending have been almost out of control. Housing benefit has increased from £300 million to £3 billion in 10 years, and the costs of board and lodging and the black economy have also increased. Most people will agree that the social security system is in a mess. It is a complicated morass and suffers from enormous abuse which we cannot afford.

Recently, I was horrified to learn that before the DHSS fraud squad arrived to investigate and prevent taxpayers being defrauded, the beneficiaries, many of whom may have been claiming improperly, were warned by the staff at the local DHSS office. That is wrong.

Mr. Alexander: Does my hon. Friend agree that as soon as that squad went in the number of people claiming benefit decreased significantly in those areas?

Mr. Townend: That is absolutely right, and shows that the social security fraud squad was a good investment. The number of claimants would have decreased still further if it had received more co-operation from the local offices.

The reform and simplification of the social security system is vital, and should be undertaken with determination and with a view to reducing the overall cost. Originally, the Government intended to make savings through the review, but because of pressure that aim has been watered down, and it is now being said that the review will have a neutral effect in terms of revenue. I am particularly perturbed that if we are successful in simplifying the procedures there will inevitably be a significant increase in take-up, and the review, instead of being broadly neutral in revenue terms, could provide another burst of spending in that Department.

The Government must accept some of the blame for social security costs. We introduced housing benefit. Indeed, I remember serving on the Bill in the previous Parliament. To be fair, when the Government tried to control the cost which was getting out of hand, they met nothing but resistance from both Opposition parties and some of my hon. Friends. The same is true of the board and lodging allowance. When it became generally known by our young people that they could be subsidised by taxpayers to leave the disciplined environment of their parents' home, and could receive twice, and sometimes three times, as much money as they could earn in a job immediately after leaving school, the costs soared sixfold. Again, when the Government, rightly, tried to control the cost, they received nothing but opposition from Labour Members.

Now we have yet another explosion, which is worrying me greatly and which will cost my right hon. Friends at the Treasury a great deal of money. I refer to the establishment of private homes for old people subsidised by the DHSS to the extent of about £165 a week. The costs of that are spiralling. It is inexplicable to a man in the north of England who is struggling to keep a wife and two children on a wage of about £100 a week that the state should pay £165 a week for a person in a private home. It encourages families to abrogate their responsibilities, and to make the state responsible for their old people.

That is having a significant effect in many constituencies in seaside towns, such as Bridlington, as it is undermining the base of the tourist industry. One can understand why hoteliers, who must work hard for 13 weeks to make a living for the whole year, are encouraged to turn their hotels into old people's homes, which will be full for 52 weeks a year and will receive a large weekly subsidy from the DHSS. Many of them think that they have struck a gold mine, but the result is the undermining of our tourist base.

The black economy is enormous and growing. About 1 million people are probably involved in it, and the cost to the Exchequer runs into billions. Those people draw benefit, increasing the cost to the DHSS, although they work in the black economy. Because they draw benefit they are included in the unemployment figures when, in reality, they are not unemployed. The black economy spreads throughout the country, but is most prevalent in the south, especially the south-east. It is incredible to think that 800,000 people are registered as unemployed in the south-east when one considers the large numbers of vacancies, and learns that employers in the hotel and restaurant business have had to import 150,000 foreigners from the Philippines, Spain and Germany to fill those jobs. The most important evidence of the black economy is that in the south more people are registered as long-term unemployed than in the north, yet, as hon. Members on both sides of the House will readily accept, the problems of unemployment are significantly worse in the north. Therefore, there can be only one possible explanation—there are more long-term jobs in the black economy in the south.

[Mr. Townend]

Until we tackle that problem we shall never reduce public expenditure in the social services Department, and we shall not reduce the numbers of unemployed. We should take a much tougher attitude to withdrawing benefit from people registered as unemployed who will not accept a vacancy. We may even have to experiment, as the Americans have done, with providing work for some of those people at the level of unemployment pay.

Because of Government spending and borrowing, the costs of servicing the national debt rise inexorably year after year. As the Select Committee report points out, the figure of £17 billion in the 1985 White Paper will increase to £19 billion by 1989. Indeed, if the interest that we have had to pay this year had been the same as our estimate for it four years ago, we would have had a further £5 billion to spend on Budget day. Those who say, "Spend more and borrow more" — they include many Conservative Members as well as Opposition Members—should not forget that in future the debts must be serviced and repaid. The higher the national debt, the higher the burden that we hand on to our children and grandchildren.

I congratulate the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the way in which he has handled the economic position during the past four weeks in the face of an enormous drop in the price of oil. If we had not had such a steady hand on the tiller, we would inevitably have had significant further increases in interest rates, and Opposition Members would have been the first to criticise. But our Chancellor has kept his head, and kept the boat steady. He is under great pressure to increase spending on everybody's little pet scheme. There are voices on the Tory side of the House and in the country that say to the Government, in view of the drop in oil revenue, "Go back to your original policy of reducing spending and borrowing."

8.40 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As one who rightly or wrongly voted against the Anglo-Irish agreement, perhaps I am in a position to say that I found the maiden speech of my hon. Friend—for that is what he is—the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) deeply moving.

It comes a bit rich for the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) to lecture us on social security when we see in the Register of Members' Interests that he is a member of Lloyd's. Like the old biblical saying about motes in one's own eye, I believe that members of Lloyd's who make that type of speech should show a little humility when they talk about those problems. I do not doubt that the black economy is a problem, but he told us about the firm hand on the tiller. When the Prime Minister and the then Financial Secretary to the Treasury were in the early stages of this Government they said that they would sort out the black economy. They have not done very much. It may be a difficult task, but those who keep the Inland Revenue Staff Association so short of personnel cannot be entirely surprised when they get into difficulties.

If we make remarks about those on social security, we should deal not with the minnows but with the massive problems, such as those of insider trading. The Department of Trade and Industry has had difficulty in achieving more than five prosecutions for insider trading. In one case the wrong person was prosecuted, and acquitted. He happened to be my constituent. Let us see some sense of proportion. Frankly, the middle of the speech of the hon. Member for Bridlington was vulgar and odious.

My constituency has many thousands of acres of Forestry Commission land. It is well managed and well organised. The planting scheme has been carried out with great care and with great community acceptability. It is wholly unacceptable for the Government to suggest that Forestry Commission land should be sold off to private interests in lumps of tens of thousands of acres. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) knows what that would do in the Grampian area. That is not the way in which Britain should be run in the 1980s.

I declare an interest. I have the good fortune—the money accrues to my constituency party and not to me—to be a Member sponsored by the National Union of Railwaymen. In his opening speech the Chief Secretary said that expenditure on the railways would increase by 9 per cent. in real terms. That was followed by the chiding about the £21 billion to £24 billion spent on unemployment benefit. For every million pounds spent on electrification, which I do not believe is very job creative, on track maintenance, which is job creative, and on replacement of new rolling stock, which is job creative, how much money will return to the state? When the unemployment benefit that would have to be paid out, the taxes collected that would not otherwise be collected from firms and individuals, adjustments to national insurance and housing benefits are taken into account, we are faced with a cost benefit analysis that may make much needed investment in the railways cheaper in the short term than is being made out. I ask for some type of Treasury assessment, because the matter was raised in depth at the political committee of the NUR this morning. There are many other people who would like a Treasury assessment.

The blue paper refers to the Falklands. The figure of £192 million is quoted for two years hence. If the islands are to be properly defended, as they must be as long as the commitment continues, some of us believe that what the Chief Secretary said about the finality of the figures may be relevant, but we doubt very much the figure of £192 million. I should like a letter on how the Government arrived at that figure.

I wish to discuss the science budget, which was raised by the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) and other hon. Members. Save British Science and those in science in Britain believe that something must be done. I interrupted the Chief Secretary's opening speech to ask about the Medical Research Council. He talked about priorities to help the council. The council refers to the prospects of new ventures which continue to open up. It says:

> "The challenge presented by such opportunities is, sadly, tempered by the grave concern which the Council must continue to express over the inadequacy of the funds which are made available through the Science Budget. During the course of the year the Chairman and Secretary met the Secretary of State for Education and Science and, subsequently, the Prime Minister, and took the opportunity to emphasise the severely damaging effect that the financial situation was having on medical research in the UK. Representations were also made through the Advisory Board for the Research Councils."

Yesterday I had the opportunity to talk to the secretary of the MRC, Sir James Gowans. He pointed out that whereas in the days of his distinguished predecessor, Sir Harold Harmsworth, there was a five year basis on which people could be assured of having their research financed, the

basis was now year to year and, in some cases, month to month. That is not the way to run medical research in Britain. The councils' report continues:

"In December 1984 the Secretary of State announced a small but welcome increase in the Science Budget as a result of which the Council received an addition to the planned allocation for 1985/86. This will increase the total resources the Council can make available for capital equipment and thus assist towards the provision of the PET scanner referred to in the Introduction and allow slightly increased funds for research grants to universities. However, the overall net effect of these supplements will do no more than maintain in 1985/86 the same purchasing power as existed in 1984/85—the severe difficulties the Council had in matching expenditure to income in that year are set out. The likelihood of concurrent reductions in research funding through the University Grants Committee can only exacerbate the Council's problems.

The Council recognises the government's commitment to controlling public expenditure and accepts the need to ensure that resources granted to it are deployed efficiently and reviewed critically. But if strenuous efforts to make better use of resources do no more than allow the Council to accommodate to a declining budget, and do not allow resources to be found for new activities, then the wealth of opportunities presented by biomedical research cannot be exploited. For example the explosive growth in the understanding of molecular and cell biology means that there are now opportunities for advances in such diverse fields as: cancer therapy; inherited, parasitic and psychiatric diseases; clinical diagnosis; and drug design. Each of these could bring significant benefits to the health of individuals in the community and to the quality of life of future generations yet unborn."

That is the considered judgment of these careful people of the MRC.

I have had eight Ten-minute Bills on the subject of kidney transplantationss. Those who know about the shortage of matching tissue for kidneys and about the problems associated with kidney machines and the financial problems now associated with those unfortunate sufferers from kidney disease realise that this presents just one example of raised expectations that cannot be fulfilled in this financial climate.

The same story applies to the Science and Engineering Research Council. It says:

"The limiting factor in the Council's work at present is the shortage of funds. In all its fields, ideas and projects which have been judged worthy by its own high standards are going unfunded. In many of these fields, reviews by independent scientists and engineers have come up with even further constraints of selection. The Council is grateful that its grant has been maintained in real terms over the last few years."

However,

"the external pace made not only by the United States of America and Japan but by France and Germany; the continuing growth of the sophistication of scientific equipment; the under-provision of staff costs; the greater training needs as manufacturing technologies also become more sophisticated and new markets are sought; the frequently disadvantageous effect of international exchange rates,"—

we have seen this in relation to the problems of CERN —make this very difficult.

Two weeks ago I spent an afternoon at the Department of Biochemistry at Oxford. Postdoctoral and young scientists, Professor Southern said,

"are facing something akin to a cultural revolution."

I wonder whether the House realises that by the 1990s the Department of Nuclear Physics at Oxford will have more than half of its staff over 60 years of age. Yet this is a young person's science. When we consider what our competitors in other countries are doing, that is tragic.

I was at the University of Dundee in January. The same story applies to its electrical engineering and other departments. It is the same story in the schools. The recent reports of Merrison at Bristol and the letter of Mr. J. T. Jardine, which I have asked to be published in *Hansard* on behalf of Scottish teachers of physics, tell a story that makes one wonder where all the seed corn for this important area will come from.

I shall cut what I intended to say about the Nature Conservancy Council. However, when he was the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury said that it should become more efficient. Those who have studied the matter say that to do away with the Macaulay Institute of Soil Research at Aberdeen is but one example of the madness of dismantling British science.

I was not called, but I sat through yesterday's debate on the strategic defence initiative. I understand why Professor Desmond Smith and Dr. Andrew Walker of the Physics Department at Heriot Watt University want to have the crock of gold of American money, otherwise where will the finance for their physics come from? Some of us believe that a great issue is at stake and that Dr. Burnett, who is the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, was right to say that there should be no SDI research at Edinburgh university until there had been further discussions.

It is tragic that we should embark on the militarisation of space simply because there are no alternative funds for distinguished science departments in British universities to call upon. I plead with the Government to do something for British science. An indication of the urgency of this need has been the formation of the Save British Science campaign.

8.55 pm

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): In view of the shortness of time available to me, I hope that the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will forgive me if I do not go down that avenue. Instead, I shall return to some of the themes that were dwelt upon so eloquently by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury when he opened the debate, and I will deal first with the objectives of public expenditure.

I welcome the fact that the White Paper refers in each of its departmental sections to the aims of public spending. That is an improvement upon previous White Papers. I readily acknowledge that there has been considerable improvements in the presentation of this White Paper and I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend, whose interest in the better management of resources and in greater efficiency is well known. However, these aims are still stated in fairly vague terms.

For example, it is stated that the main aim of the overseas aid budget is to

"promote sustainable economic and social development and to alleviate poverty in developing countries . . . Political and commercial considerations are taken into account in allocating funds."

There is no reference to any percentage target or gross national product that we hope to reach for overseas aid, or to any Government mechanism for monitoring whether it is more cost-effective to grant aid directly, Government to Government, or through the medium of voluntary agencies. I should have been comforted by references of that kind.

Furthermore, the aims make no reference to a Government target for reducing the number of dwellings that are still below standard, or to any objective for

[Mr. Tim Yeo]

providing housing in areas where the employment option exists. The aims would be greatly strengthened by references of that kind.

Above all, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and his Committee point out, no attempt seems to have been made in the White Paper to distinguish between the relative priorities of one area of expenditure compared with another. Although my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary of the Treasury refers to chart 1.11, that is not the whole answer. It may simply reflect the consequences of different bilateral battles that have been fought between the Treasury and individual Departments.

Somebody who read the White Paper wanting to find out whether the Government attach greater priority to education or to transport would find that the only clue is on page 2 of volume 1, in the section entitled "Main points from this White Paper." It draws attention to the fact that additional funds have been allocated this year to four areas, one of which is capital spending on roads.

Education is not mentioned in any of those four areas. That might suggest that at least during the period when the White Paper was being drawn up—I understand it was a number of months — transport was given a higher priority than education. I wonder whether that was a conscious or collective decision. I hope it was not; if it was, I doubt whether that reflected the mood of the country.

The first conclusion that I draw from the White Paper is that, despite a considerable advance in its presentation, it still reflects the basis upon which expenditure decisions are made; that is, basically bilateral negotiation, as the Select Committee pointed out. One consequence is that, if a Department wants to increase expenditure in one sector for which it is responsible, it has to attempt first to meet that extra expenditure by a saving from somewhere else within its departmental budget.

Suffolk county council, for example, which has been a model of efficiency in its management and which has a prudent and impeccable expenditure record, finds that this year its rate support grant is cut substantially, despite all its efforts to comply with Government policy, so as to pay for the extra expenditure which the Department of the Environment wishes to allocate to inner cities.

My second point, which follows from the first, is that the vagueness with which the aims are stated makes it difficult to measure whether public expenditure is effective in reaching those aims. If no criteria are clearly defined in the White Paper for judging success, how are we to analyse the performance of Departments? There are still far too few measures of output in the White Paper, although I welcome the fact that there are more measures of output than we have ever had.

The section on the Department of Health and Social Security includes figures for patient treatment, one output measure which is welcome, but it is not complete or adequate, nor is it necessarily the most important. Others that might have been included are life expectancy, mortality rates, the incidence of specific disease, the number of days lost from work through illness and the variation in health between classes and occupations. If those output measurements had been included in the White Paper, we should have had a real basis for judging whether the National Health Service was effective in achieving the aim of a healthy nation. Incidentally, if we reached that aim, it might result in a reduction in patient treatments and in NHS expenditure.

On my third point, value for money and efficiency, again I welcome the much greater emphasis which the White Paper appears to put on getting value for money. There are many references to it. The emphasis on privatisation and on outside sub-contracting is to be applauded, but huge areas of public expenditure are not touched. Anyone who comes into contact with the public sector could identify areas where improvements and savings could be made, but in the main improvements are not being made. It is no use expecting officials to change the habits of a lifetime and suddenly to be driven out of their comfortable ways into innovatory initiatives aimed at improving efficiency. The only way it will happen is if there is determined leadership.

From my experience of organisations which are not threatened with commercial competition and where the ultimate sanction of bankruptcy or redundancy does not hang over the employees I know that a relentless and laborious drive from the top is required to achieve better value for money. Parliamentary pressure encourages Ministers to concentrate on policy development and presentation, but I urge them to pay more attention to the unglamorous task of good management, without which we shall not achieve a better use of resources.

I wanted to make a fourth and final point about expenditure on unemployment, to which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) drew attention as the fastest area of expansion, but I am aware of the time. As a Back Bencher I appreciate that seven minutes is a generous allocation. Having sat through the whole debate, I should not wish to encroach on the half hour that is available to the Opposition Front Bench. So I shall leave out the last point, which might have been mildly helpful to them.

9.3 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): This debate will be remembered for the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). The House heard a moving description of the problems of his constituency, economic and political, and his plea for a spirit of benevolence and justice.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I wonder where the friends of the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) have all gone to. I wonder why they did not tell him that it would be convenient for him to be in the Chamber at 9 o'clock.

Mr. Davis: I think that most hon. Members, in a spirit of courtesy and generosity, will extend to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh the usual understanding for a new Member and will not wish to draw attention to that fact.

I was impressed by the hon. Gentleman's sincere declaration of his aim to create Irish unity by peaceful means and his equally sincere condemnation of the obscenity of violence—as he referred to it—in Northern Ireland. The hon. Gentleman paid a tribute to his predecessor, and I think that he will find that the House will accord him even greater respect as a result. It was a poignant tribute as his predecessor was his political opponent. It is also there that there is a bond between those

of us who have lost elections. On a lighter note, there is an even closer bond between those of us of all parties who have lost our seats. I express the hope that the hon. Gentleman does not join our group.

This debate also gives me the opportunity to welcome an old opponent, the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), to his new role. His was not a maiden speech, but I shall treat it as such. I am glad that he has decided to maintain his interest in our economic affairs and to contribute to our debates from the Back Benches. I suspect that if he continues to do so we shall all benefit from contributions based on his insider knowledge. Perhaps we shall benefit almost as much as we do from the contributions of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). The right hon. and learned Gentleman bids fair to become the next Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee when my right hon. Friend becomes the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service after the next election.

That brings me to the contribution of the present Chairman of that Select Committee. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) will not mind if I do not comment on his detailed remarks about the presentation of the White Paper. I appreciate that he has been in his place for almost all the debate and has listened to the contributions of Members from both sides of the House, and I hope that he will excuse me if I do not go into the detail which he included in his speech. The Opposition are much more concerned about the policies and priorities that are reflected in the White Paper.

The right hon. Member for Worthing told us that it is now the Government's intention to control public expenditure rather than to cut it, but the White Paper does not support that statement. The Government's figures show that they are planning to spend less in real terms next year than they are spending in the current year. The only way in which the right hon. Gentleman can dress up the Government's figures to show stability in public expenditure is to remove the proceeds from selling national assets—something which I agree that we should do—and to include the figure which his Committee, the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, has described as an "above normal reserve", while ignoring the changes in the procedures for setting priorities and allocating reserves. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury described some of the changes this afternoon, but some remain that he forgot to mention. I will return to this point.

For the present, let us accept the White Paper figures at face value, as we are asked to do by the Government, and move on to consider the Government's priorities. First, there is to be a reduction in social security expenditure. It seems that at last the hon. Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) is getting his own way. He has often called for a reduction in expenditure on social security, and this coming year he will be pleased, for there is to be reduction in expenditure on supplementary benefit. The reduction will not arise from any reduction in the number of unemployed. I suspect that instead there will be a reduction in the moneys which are paid to those who are poor. As the Labour party has always claimed, the purpose of the social security review is not to redistribute from the poor to the very poor. The idea behind it is to reduce the total sum which is available to the poor in order to finance tax cuts. If the Government's record is any guide to their future intentions, their aim is to pay for tax cuts for the very rich by reducing expenditure on supplementary benefit.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) spoke about the reduction in expenditure on education. The White Paper shows a reduction of £800 million in real terms—5 per cent.—in the coming year. It also appears that there is to be a reduction of 10 per cent. in real terms by 1988-89. The reduction is scheduled to take place at a time when the school population will decline. However, it will decline by less than 5 per cent. I do not understand how a Government who are supposedly seeking to preserve and improve education standards can use the opportunity of a decline in the school population of 5 per cent. to cut expenditure by 10 per cent. in real terms, and we have had no explanation of why the Government claim to be able to reduce expenditure twice as quickly as the reduction in the school population.

I have studied the more detailed figures in volume II to see where the cuts in education will be made. My hon. Friends will not be surprised to find that, during the next 12 months, the biggest cut in cash terms will take place in the provision of school meals and milk. The cut will be from £426 million to £280 million—a reduction of £146 million—a cut of 34 per cent. in the provisions for school meals and milk. We have had no details of how these cuts will be introduced and no explanation of which children will not receive subsidised school meals and milk in the future, but we do know that only five years ago even this Government were forced to publish the Black report on inequality in health. That report prepared, not by the Labour party, but by a group of independent experts, recommended that there should be an expansion of the school meal service if we are trying to improve the health of British people.

That was the burden of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short). My hon. Friend described the many areas in which we needed to extend and improve the National Health Service. She movingly described the needs of the National Health Service. In response, the Government have said that they are going to increase expenditure on the National Health Service next year by 7·5 per cent. in cash terms. However, in real terms the increase is only 1·7 per cent., which is less than we need to stand still. That is not extending the National Health Service—by any yardstick that is a cut in the National Health Service.

The Black report stated that it was important not only to look at the expenditure on the National Health Servce but also at expenditure on other social programmes such as housing. If we are trying to improve the health of British people, we need to improve the housing stock.

The greatest failure of the Government is housing, and the Government's provision for housing deserves the greatest criticism—*[Interruption.]*—The Chancellor of the Exchequer can snort and sneer, but it is true.

I was pleased at first sight—as I was intended to be pleased—when I studied volume I of the White Paper. It stated that in the coming year, there would be an increase in expenditure on housing. Taken at face value, there will be an increase of £0·1 million next year. Of course, in cash terms £0·1 million—£100,000—is the sum not to be sneezed at. However, when I studied volume II my pleasure disappeared. I found that the sum is not £100,000 but £10,000. The sum of £0·1 million in volume

[Mr. Davis]

I is shown as a result of simply rounding up. The correct figure of £10,000 increases the housing provision from £2,742 million to £2,752 million. In the White Paper that is shown as an increase of £0·1 million.

They are figures which are designed to confuse. I do not call these figures "fiddled figures" but "misleading figures". They are designed to confuse because they are net of capital receipts whereas it is the gross expenditure which matters in terms of bricks and mortar. How much will be spent altogether? The Government's White Paper refers to an increased provision. If the Chancellor wishes to intervene I will, of course, give way. I would prefer to hear what he has to say instead of listening to his mutterings.

The Government refer to an increased provision of £330 million in 1986-87 over 1985-86. The truth is that it is £40,000 less when compared with the outturn for 1985-86, but even these figures are cash and not real terms. In fact, there is a more substantial cut in housing expenditure in real terms. This year, the Government are spending 18 per cent. less in real terms compared with last year. Next year, they will cut the housing budget by 4 per cent., a cut of more than £100 million in real terms. The Government admit in the White Paper that

"The major part of public expenditure on housing supports the provision, repair and maintenance of rented housing by local authorities and housing associations . . . new building by local authorities, housing associations"

is necessary to provide for the elderly, the disabled and others whose needs cannot be met in the public sector.

Against this background, no hon. Member will have been deceived by the Chief Secretary's attempted sleight of hand today. He admitted that there has been a reduction in the number of houses built by councils and housing associations—the accommodation specifically

"for the elderly, the disabled and others whose needs cannot be met by the private sector."

He then sought to defend that catastrophic decline in council building by referring to an increase in private ownership. He knows that that is a totally different question. The housing shortage will not be solved by the sale of council houses. Whether houses are owned or rented, and owned by councils, housing authorities or individually, is irrelevant in any debate about the housing shortage. We shall solve the housing shortage only by building more houses, and that is precisely what will not happen under this Government.

Whether one looks at starts or completions, the total for 1985 was lower than in both 1984 and 1979. In every year since the Government came into office, the total of council and private new build has been lower than the last year of the Labour Government. Moreover, it has been lower than for every year of the previous Conservative Government. In no year in the 1980s have the Government matched the house builiding figures in the worst year of the 1970s.

Worse, the starts and the completions for both council and private accommodation in 1985 were lower than in the last year of the Labour Government.

At a time when 400,000 building workers are unemployed, it is nothing short of a scandal for the Government to prefer them to spend their lives sitting at home instead of building homes for other people.

Some Conservative Members say that they would like to see a better housing building programme — they remember a time when there was a different Conservative Prime Minister. However, they then go on to ask, "How can we pay for the extra houses?" The Government know the answer, and I shall tell their supporters.

The increase in a housing building programme can be paid for without any extra taxes, borrowing or printing money. All the Government need to do is tell local authorities that they can spend their money on building houses. The councils can spend £3 billion in cash—they have £5 billion in total — that the Government have locked up in bank accounts. It is not the Government's money but the councils' capital receipts.

A Labour Government would unlock the accounts and encourage councils to spend money on providing homes for people. We should increase public expenditure. That policy is supported not just by the Labour party and, as one would expect, the TUC, but by the British Institute of Management, the chambers of commerce, and even in some respects by the CBI, on the basis of the commission established by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the policy is supported by the Church of England. It is not supported by the Select Committee on the Treasury and Civil Service, but it is supported by the Select Committee on Employment, which perhaps cares more about the level of unemployment.

Why will the Government not increase public expenditure? Why do they insist on cuts in social security, in education and in housing? The reason is that they have priorities different from those of the Labour party, the TUC, the British Institute of Management, the CBI and the Church of England. In short, their priorities are different from those of the rest of the nation.

The Chief Secretary devoted a large part of his speech to the procedure adopted by the Government for setting their priorities. We have the testimony of the right hon. Member for Worthing that the Chief Secretary is bringing his own personal approach to the setting of priorities. The Chief Secretary omitted to mention a major part of the new procedure for holding down public expenditure to the planning totals by Departments contained in this White Paper. The Chief Secretary no longer takes such decisions, nor does the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Anyone who managed to get as far as the back page of today's *Financial Times* will know that it is someone else altogether.

Under the new procedure, any Secretary of State who becomes convinced that he needs more money and has a good case for using some of that above-normal reserve of £1·4 billion; who thinks that the money should be used for job creation instead of tax cuts; or who decides to boost his leadership campaign by showing signs of rising damp must in future not simply seek to persuade the Chief Secretary to the Treasury or even convince the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if that were possible. He must put his request in writing and send a detailed justification to the Chief Secretary. There is nothing wrong with that, but he must then send a copy to the Prime Minister.

Mr. John Townend: Quite right.

Mr. Davis: That is not quite right. The hon. Member for Bridlington welcomes that. We all know about his motives. The Prime Minister will now take the decisions. What is the point of sending copies of correspondence to the Prime Minister? What on earth will the Prime Minister do with all these pieces of paper, assuming that she is not too busy dealing with requests from Cabinet Ministers to leak their colleagues' correspondence? The point of it can

only be that the Prime Minister does not trust the Chief Secretary. The Chancellor does not even get a copy. It is the Prime Minister who sets the priorities.

The right hon. and learned Member for Dover spoke about the powerful role of 10 Downing street in economic policy under the last Labour Government. Not even the right hon. and learned Gentleman would ever suggest that any Labour Prime Minister insisted on receiving copies of letters from Members of the Cabinet to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Of course there must be priorities, but in this Government it is the Prime Minister who sets them. The Chancellor of the Exchequer can smile because his in-tray will be empty. He does not even rate a copy.

The Prime Minister is not listening to hon. Members, the TUC, the British Institute of Management, the CBI or the Church of England. She is turning a deaf ear to the people and is impervious to argument or protests. She is turning her face away from all the signs of social unrest, from the riots that have occurred in Bristol, Brixton and Birmingham. She is like a latter day dictator on some island in the Caribbean waiting to be airlifted out with her entourage in a fleet of American helicopters, leaving her Back-Bench Tontons Macoutes to face the wrath of the British people.

The Opposition will vote tonight not only against the White Paper but to prevent the whole of the United Kingdom from becoming like Newry and Armagh.

9.24 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. John Moore): Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis), I should like to start by joining him and others who have congratulated and welcomed the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I share the views of the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh made a humorous introduction, although I do not imagine that he would expect me to agree with him about the longevity of this Parliament. We listened with great care, and we understand the seriousness of the issues that he raised. He brings wide experience of elected office, which was clear from the authority in his speech. We are grateful for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about his predecessor, James Nicholson, whose contribution the whole House welcomed and recognised. I am sure that I speak for the whole House when I say that we look forward to the hon. Gentleman's speeches.

Perhaps I might comment on the speech of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees). I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary joins me, having listened to that speech, in welcoming my right hon. and learned Friend's contribution. On a personal note, I should like to say how much we all recognise—especially those of us on the Government Bench—the outstanding record of service to our Government and our country that my right hon. and learned Friend has given already.

As usual, my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) did an outstanding job chairing the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee. As the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) said, my right hon. Friend gave the House the opportunity to benefit from the thorough analysis that that Select Committee brings to out debates. He gave us some bouquets this time. Those in regard to presentation were justified. I shall not weary the House, but I took the time to look back to 1978-79 to assess the changes. I am sure that the whole House welcomes the substantial improvement in presentation.

My right hon. Friend addressed the important matter of the timing of this debate, on which I ought to take a few moments to give the Government's view. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyme and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover wondered at the suggestion in the White Paper. My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing and the Select Committee have suggested that next year's debate on the White Paper should be deferred to late May or early June. They say that that would allow them to consider the White Paper in detail and would concentrate the debate on future years.

I am aware that the Select Committee has to complete its assessment of the White Paper in a relatively short time, although it has been helped by the further squeezing of the publication timetable this year. I fully share the objective that the debate should focus on future years, but there are factors which favour an early date. For example, I know that many hon. Members welcome the chance to discuss the Government's spending plans quite soon after they are published. There would be obvious disadvantages in a delay of nearly five months. By that time, we would already be well into the first of the three years of which the White Paper sets out forward spending plans. The detailed Supply Estimates for that year would have been presented nearly three months before the debate. There would be some danger of having the horse before the cart.

Holding the debate in June would mean that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor would not have the benefit of hon. Member's views on public expenditure when considering his Budget plans. I imagine that some hon. Members might be reluctant to miss the opportunity to make their views known at this time of the year. There is a balance of advantage to be struck, and the House and the Government should reflect carefully before concluding which arrangements would be preferable.

Mr. Higgins: I am happy, at the moment, to keep an open mind on this issue. My right hon. Friend is making his comments against the background of an autumn statement which is now much expanded in scope including the number of years that it covers. Therefore, most of what my right hon. Friend has just mentioned could adequately be discussed on the basis of the autumn statement.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and, indeed, the whole of the Treasury ministerial team is listening attentively to my right hon. Friend. I am sure that it will take cognisance of what he said. My right hon. Friend mentioned an item in the *Financial Times* which was elaborated on at some length by the hon. Member for Hodge Hill. I refer to the article by Philip Stephens. I think that an excessive amount is being read into speculative journalism these days. This is obviously the time of year when procedures for the public expenditure survey are regularly reviewed and any changes agreed. Our procedure is under way at present, and I do not think that we should pursue that any further.

Two essential issues have dominated the debate today. They related on the one hand to the quantity and on the other hand to the quality of public expenditure. Those were the two basic themes round which most of the contributions were made. If I may, I will attempt to take the House through those two areas.

[Mr. Moore]

I deal with the quantity debate first. Much of it dwelt on the nature of what public expenditure should be as a percentage of gross domestic product. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover expressed the position very well when describing his experiences in office. According to the earlier remarks of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, the Government in chart 1.2 of volume I of the public expenditure White Paper have made their position clear. They laid out their plans for the future, they saw stable expenditure, that is expenditure decreasing not in real terms but as a percentage of GDP in the next few years, because of our success in achieving growth.

However, it was somewhat more difficult, as it has been throughout, to establish the official Opposition's position. All we can do—as opposed to some of the debates about their very large expenditure plans—is to look at the record. We have heard clear echoes of that record in some of the debates in the last few weeks. If one goes back to the period before 1974-75, the Opposition came into office in 1974 inheriting, as a percentage of GDP, a public expenditure figure of approximatley 42·5. We saw the kind of appalling explosion in expenditure that produced public expenditure of 48·5 per cent. of GDP by 1975-76. The result was not decisions taken by Her Majesty's Government, but decisions imposed upon Her Majesty's Government by the IMF, which brought the figure back to that of 1978-79—43 per cent.—the figure with which the Opposition entered office. With regard to the Opposition's record, the position is confirmed by their attitude which we have observed in so many of their commitments of late.

It is not sufficient to debate what percentage of GDP we would like to see. The question is, what is underlying the potential growth of that GDP? One does not have to look very far to see this Government's clear record. Our record in recent years had been outstanding. Gross domestic product has grown by over 3.5 per cent. in 1985, to top the Community's growth. It grew faster in that year than in the United States. It is the best annual growth rate since 1973, and—this is critical—with lower inflation, the best performance over four years since the 1973 oil shock. The economy is forecast to grow by 3 per cent. at least in 1986. It is that factor, associated with the Government's commitment on public expenditure, that makes a significant difference to the Opposition's potential.

Another question in relation to the quantity is not simply the percentage of GDP, but how it is to be financed. If the method of financing affects the quality and nature of growth, obviously the public expenditure totals will be in jeopardy. Despite any protestations to the contrary, there are essentially only three ways in which expenditure can be financed—one can tax, borrow or print. As we have heard from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), he has clearly limited himself as to tax. He has made it clear publicly from the Dispatch Box that he would not seek to change the basic rate—at least, he would not increase it. The right hon. Gentleman must be aware by now that taxing 100 per cent. of the income of those earning above £30,000—even on the extraordinary presumption that people will continue to earn beyond £30,000—will at most, for one year, give him a total income of £1·5 billion—not the £3 billion he thought when he first discussed the issue. The right hon. Gentleman obviously realises that he is trapped with respect to taxes.

The only presumption we can draw from the extraordinary spending programme of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook is that there will be further borrowing or resort to the printing presses. We shall soon return in that case to the precise position we were in when, unfortunately, we had to recover from the vicissitudes of a Labour Government.

The second major theme of the debate has been the quality of expenditure. The debate took two courses—a study of the nature of what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary called value for money and a debate on priorities. I thought that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary expressed well what was meant by value of money when he talked about achieving more in goods and services for a given unit of taxpayers' money. I know that the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne as Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, all the Committee's members, and the Government would regard that as a critical feature of the prudential use of that rare commodity, taxpayers' money.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover and my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) would, I know, be interested in some of the ways in which we have been able specifically to achieve efficiency gains in value for money terms. I do not know how many hon. Members have carefully studied both volumes of the Government's expenditure plans. I accept that volume II, with more than 400 pages, is a little lengthy, but I wish to draw attention to some points with respect to value for money that are critical to public expenditure. I say that as an active member, in many ways, of the Public Accounts Committee. Paragraph 22 on page 8 of volume I refers to value for money being achieved

> "particularly through increased competition in buying equipment. In 1984-85 27 per cent. of contracts by value were placed following competitive tender"—

an important achievement; I know of the work that the Public Accounts Committee has done——

> "compared with 14 per cent. in 1979-80".

That significant and important improvement will give genuine value for money.

Paragraph 33 on page 11 of volume I refers to improvements in efficiency, for example, in jobcentre services. It states:

> "The jobcentres are expected to place 1·9 million people in jobs in 1985-86 (compared to 1·5 million in 1981-82) at a cost per placing of £59 (£96 in 1981-82)."

That is another important illustration of clear efficiency gains. Paragraph 33 continues:

> "In the unemployment benefit service the average ratio of claimants to staff has improved from 75:1 in 1979-80 to 119:1 in 1985-86, with a target for further improvement to 130:1 in 1988-89."

I know that such efficiency gains will be welcomed by all of us, whatever our views about the quantity of public expenditure.

Priorities were discussed a great deal. There has been some criticism in the Treasury and Civil Service Committee report and, in part, from some of my colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames). The right hon. Members for Sparkbrook and for Ashton-under-Lyne, my right hon.

Friend the Member for Worthing and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover covered this area of priorities.

I would like to stress two points. I wish that all hon. Members who have not had the opportunity would examine chart 111 on page 20 of volume I of the White Paper. That chart shows the significant pattern of priority changes over the period that the Government have been in office. I would gently remind the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook that he was rightly conscious of demographic changes in the health areas. That was a perfectly fair point to make. However, when examining the pattern of past, and not future, spending — though we will examine proposed future spending when appropriate — the right hon. Gentleman should realise that when it comes to the education budget there has been a fall of one third in school rolls and happily — I know that the feeling will be shared by all hon. Members — the spending per pupil has risen in real terms.

Mr. Hattersley: That depends on when the right hon. Gentleman begins his accounting. That figure is down in real terms on last year's figure.

Mr. Moore: I was trying to examine the record of the Government as a whole. It is perfectly legitimate to look at how the figures have increased over the Government's period in office. The figure in that period has increased in real terms per pupil.

There was a major debate on capital expenditure, about the way in which the Government should, in public terms, spend more on what has become a wide public debate about infrastructure. I find, and I am sure my hon. Friends also find, that the Opposition's attitude on that is quite extraordinary.

I do not know how many hon. Members were present when my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary reminded the House earlier of the relative records of this Government and the last Labour Government. I may listen to criticism from the Conservative Benches and from some hon. Members who share no responsibility for the Labour Government's period in office, but it is extraordinary that those who were members of a Labour Government who reduced capital expenditure by 20 per cent. in real terms in their period of office should have the effrontery and gall to criticise the Government who in difficult times have maintained public capital expenditure in real terms. If one looks at the data and at the way the Labour Government reduced expenditure——

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moore: No, I will not give way as I want to complete my point. The hon. Gentleman had more than enough opportunity, not only in the debate, in which, unfortunately he could not participate, but in his interrogation of witnesses in the Select Committee, to state his views.

I want to remind the House of the two critical areas of which we hear so much outside the House—health and roads. During Labour's period of office, capital expenditure on health and roads——

Mr. Hattersley: What does the right hon. Gentleman mean?

Mr. Moore: If the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook had been listening to me, he would know that I was referring to remarks made earlier by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, who mentioned both health and roads. I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman has taken this opportunity to catch up with the debate and that I can now continue.

Mr. Hattersley: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will continue.

Mr. Moore: Naturally I will continue, as the figures illustrate the essential hypocrisy of some of the arguments on this subject which occur outside the House.

During the period of the Labour Administration there was a decrease in capital expenditure on the Health Service of nearly 38 per cent. while in this Government's period of office we have increased capital expenditure by almost 11 per cent. That is a classic illustration——

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Moore: I would like to complete my point and I will give way in a moment.

During the Labour Administration there was a decrease in public expenditure on roads of 36 per cent. and under this Government there has been an increase of 10 per cent. In the past six years there has been an expenditure increase, in real terms, on trunk roads and motorways of 25 per cent.

Mr. Pavitt: Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the reason for the decrease of capital expenditure in 1974-75 was that the Labour Government decided to give the nurses the Halsbury award and that there was then a deliberate switch from spending on buildings to spending on people?

Mr. Moore: Not only did my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary remind the Opposition what has been done for the nurses while this Government have been in office, but I just happen to have with me a copy of the 1979-80 Labour Government's expenditure White Paper. It shows quite clearly that throughout the period there was a year in, year out, decline in capital expenditure on the Health Service.

Mr. Pavitt: That was deliberate.

Mr. Moore: The hon. Gentleman says that was deliberate. I find great difficulty in saying anything more about that subject.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the reason for the large decrease in capital expenditure on the Health Service by the Labour Government was that, at that time, they had to go cap in hand to the International Monetary Fund because they had run this country into a state of bankruptcy?

Mr. Moore: My hon. Friend is right, but he is right only in terms of time. If he studies the figures he will find that, consistently throughout the Labour Government's term of office, they reduced capital expenditure on the Health Service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) asked me about some facts that he had uncovered, he thought, about the alliance. He endeavoured to intervene in the speech of the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Wrigglesworth). The hon. Member would not give way. I had received similar

[Mr. Moore]

information. It is one of the matters that makes it difficult for the official Opposition and the Government to understand the facts upon which the SDP and the Liberals base their arguments.

I have had a letter sent to me by a friend. I do not know how many hon. Members have seen it. It has been delivered throughout the country during February and it is from the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen). The letter has the title;

"Mrs. Thatcher and Mr. Kinnock do not want you to see this letter."

The letter talks about:

"The frightening facts of our economic collapse."

Facts? Let me just draw to the attention of the House one or two of the facts from which the public is supposed to be learning about the economic policies of a not very present alliance. The facts are:

"the UK's share of world trade"—

I am told in the letter, has declined from 17·2 per cent. to 8·6 per cent. Fact—in 1980, it was 9·7 per cent. as opposed to 17·2 per cent. The letter is relatively demeaning to the United Kingdom. We are told:

"we are in the third division"—

that is a point about which my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington asked tonight—

"with Hong Kong, Puerto Rico, the USSR, Yugoslavia and Taiwan."

We are told that the United Kingdom's GNP per head—it was repeated in the debate—is below that of Italy.

I did my best to try to establish the facts upon which the alliance argument was based. The data are all in the "World Bank Year Book 1985", the World Bank's latest year book. It shows that, as opposed to the $5,735 shown in the alliance letter, in the United Kingdom it is in fact $9,200. In addition, Puerto Rico is shown as having a GNP per head of $5,004. It is, in fact, $2,500. Those are the facts upon which economic debate is supposed to take place.

I could give many more illustrations, which are critical to the debate. I have listened to a serious Opposition——

Mr. Dalyell *rose*——

Mr. Moore: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. The interesting letter which is addressed to those people who might support either of the main parties in the House states that the Government have been making it systematically

"more difficult for the business community to keep people in work. Employers' national insurance payments now represent a bigger portion of the economy than before the Conservatives gained power."

Facts? The SDP and the Liberal party seem to have forgotten that the national insurance surcharge has been abolished. The proportion of GDP represented by employers' NIC has fallen, not increased, from 4·8 per cent. in 1978-79 to 3·5 per cent. in 1985-86. Those are the facts.

I am also told in the same letter, which has been circulated to many of our constituents:

"The tax burden on corporate income"

has gone up as a proportion of GDP. Corporation tax on non-North sea companies fell during the period from 2·2 per cent. of GDP in 1978-79 to 2·1 per cent. I gather that the SDP and the Liberal party think that we should not take account of the North sea. That makes it difficult for those of us who come to these debates and try, as I have, to consider the debate from the Opposition's point of view in terms of the quantity and quality of public expenditure to listen to contributions from the alliance below the Gangway.

Mr. Dalyell: Four of us, two from the Opposition and two Conservative Members, have made serious speeches about the science budget in a non-partisan manner. How does the Minister reply to the Science and Engineering Research Council and the grave worries of the Medical Research Council and other scientists?

Mr. Moore: I am endeavouring to proceed. There was an extraordinary amendment on the Order Paper put down by the alliance—although it was not called by Mr. Speaker—which seems to suggest that it had an interest and a role in this debate. I am having difficulty correlating that with the information I have been given.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook asked an important question about ECGD credit. I entirely accept that some of the tables and charts in the bound text are rather difficult to get to grips with, but it is an important issue for all of us. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not mind if I put the record straight. He referred to what he saw as a 75 per cent. reduction in the provisions for ECGD credit under support costs. I can understand why he should misinterpret that as a lessening of support for our exporters.

It is important to put on record that the White Paper made it clear that the value of export business being supported will remain at around £3 billion a year over the next three years. It shows that the pattern of support has not changed. The cost of interest support reflects the difference between the market rate and the fixed rate set under the international consensus. Since 1981 the measures agreed with trading partners have brought consensus rates more into line with the market rates. As the volume of business at the old consensus rate is replaced by new business the cost of interest support will fall. That is a phenomenon that is occurring with our competitors, too.

I think that it is important, as the autumn statement made clear, that the provision for export support was raised by £200 million a year. We have recently introduced a new soft loan facility under the Aid and Trade Provision. Essentially, the basic provision in terms of the quantity of export is unchanged. I know that the right hon. Gentleman will want to re-examine that because I do not think that he will disagree with it.

The right hon. Gentleman raised the issue, as he has before, of the cost of unemployment. The right hon. Gentleman told us last week that unemployment cost the country between £21·5 billion and £24 billion a year. As he knows, we regard such figures as bogus. We know from the White Paper that social security benefits, which he referred to tonight, paid to the unemployed are expected to total around £6·75 billion in 1986-87. However, as he knows, there is no easy route back to zero unemployment. One cannot know how much even of that sum is an avoidable cost to the public purse. Calculations giving even bigger numbers purporting to take account of tax receipts forgone are equally bogus. It is impossible to say what public finances would look like if somehow unemployment were to be eliminated.

Of course, the right hon. Gentleman's purpose in inflating the figures is to create the illusion that this is the

source from which Labour's grandiose spending plan—we still have not had any response to the detailed points my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary made earlier in the debate—can be financed. A moment's reflection will show just how fanciful that is. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook told us on the radio last Sunday that he hoped to reduce unemployment by 1 million. The White Paper tells us that that will save him expenditure of £2 billion. That is not going far towards his £24 billion bill for Labour's programme. He will have to find another £22 billion elsewhere and that is before the cost of renationalisation, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said tonight.

The hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley raised questions concerning the science research budget, and I shall consider them carefully. I shall also consider the points on which the hon. Member for Linlithgow asked for detailed answers, as he always does. I believe that he was fair in making some of those points. However, in the last survey we increased the priority for science. An extra £15 million was spent on the science budget, to be used selectively, on advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils to nurture the growth points in research and to get better value for money. The hon. Gentleman was fair enough to recognise that. The universities received an additional £9 million, partly to provide extra equipment to strengthen the research base. The hon. Gentleman made an important point and my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley made a good speech.

We transferred resources from other programmes to fund a further 5,000 higher education places on high-tech courses under the engineering and technology programme. The research councils are continuing to develop relations with industry, and to encourage financial associations with the private sector — *[Interruption.]* I am trying to respond to the important speech of the hon. Member for Linlithgow. I shall pursue his points beyond the debate, but I hope that my comments have been helpful to him.

The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) raised many detailed points, and no doubt she will pursue her questions on health and social security when the departmental Select Committee takes evidence. I shall not attempt to give a complete list of answers tonight. However, I stress the priority that the Government have given to the Health Service. The White Paper provides an additional £320 million for health and personal social services in 1986-87. Efficiency savings are being achieved so that extra services are being provided. Between 1978 and 1984 in-patient and day-care cases rose by 1 million, and out-patient cases by 3 million. I shall ensure that the hon. Lady's detailed points about that part of the budget are drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

I was asked why the level of aid and assistance in Northern Ireland was higher than in other parts of the United Kingdom. The unemployment level of 21 per cent. in Northern Ireland is higher than the average for the rest of the United Kingdom. Therefore, it is not surprising that the per capita spending to support employment is higher. It is even less surprising that per capita spending on law and order is higher.

I have now covered all the points raised in the debate —*[Interruption.]* I appreciate the help of the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook. Perhaps he would like to extend his help specifically to answer the question of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary. *[Interruption.]* There is plenty of time. When the hon. Member for Hodge Hill gave an additional seven minutes to the debate, he sought to ensure that his hon. Friend had the opportunity to intervene. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary gave the Opposition the opportunity to explain how they would finance the £24 billion annual expenditure programme, to which they are committed. At the most conservative estimate, that would increase VAT to 41 per cent. a year. But the Opposition completely failed to answer his question. I am happy to continue to consider the detailed commitments of the Opposition regarding maternity and death grants, child benefit, pensions, early retirement and unemployment benefit.

For more than 30 years the state's appetite for the nation's wealth has grown and grown. The Government are now bringing that appetite under control, thereby curbing inflation, and giving the power to choose back to individual people. Public spending is on target and will remain stable in real terms. Thus, as the nation's income continues to rise, the proportion taken by the state will continue to fall. Public expenditure under these plans will take the smallest proportion of GDP since 1972-73.

That is why I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the Opposition amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 186, Noes 345.

Division No. 83] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis

Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. Allen McKay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(Tayside N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.
Main Question put and agreed to.
Resolved,

That this House takes note of the White Paper on the Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 (Cmnd. 9702).

Police Federations (Public Statements)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[*Mr. Sainsbury.*]

10.14 pm

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): On 14 January an assistant chief constable of Northern Ireland handed to the chairman of the Police Federation of Northern Ireland a paper of which I have a copy and which stated that regulation 35 of the Royal Ulster Constabulary's code had unilaterally been amended by his chief constable, Sir John Hermon. Regulation 35 read:

"Nothing in these regulations will preclude the spokesmen of any of the constituent sections of the Police Association for Northern Ireland making or issuing any statement for the news media concerning the welfare and efficiency of their members."

These words are incapable of any other meaning than that the spokesman of the Police Federation, the principal element of the Police Association, is free to speak out on all matters affecting the welfare and efficiency of its members, as Parliament intended when it passed the parent Act. However, the amendment, which was made without one word of consultation or explanation substituted the following words:

"Statements and interviews and the publication of articles in any journal or periodical concerning matters of general force policy and actions or expressions of opinion on police problems or duties are not permitted without the express consent or approval of the chief constable."

The amendment continued:

"Where any aspect of welfare or efficiency may relate to force policy or actions, police problems or duties, the chief constable should be consulted and his approval obtained before any statement is made or any article published."

These words have no other meaning than that the chief constable has decided to prevent the federation making any comment in public of which he has not specifically approved in advance.

Over the following weekend the chief constable went further. He withdrew the amendment which I have quoted and substituted for it a further force order cancelling regulation 35—the federation's free-speech regulation—in its entirety. The exact words of the order were:

"Regulation 35 is cancelled pending consideration of an amending regulation."

Those are the origins of the damaging and unnecessary dispute that is upsetting the Royal Ulster Constabulary and giving aid and comfort to its enemies. It is the issue which is now, quite properly, engaging the attention of the House.

I approach this matter far more in sorrow than in anger. I have sought to drain my words of any emotional content. I have been personally involved in policing matters for close on 16 years but never before have I encountered an issue that raised such fundamental principles of British justice as this one, and the principle need to be spelt out clearly.

The first issue is free speech and the second is the duty on all citizens—and most of all on chief constables of police—to respect the letter and spirit of the law as Parliament makes it. The third issue is the practical need to bring this distressing and undignified quarrel swiftly to an end with no further damage and before it gets out of hand. What has upset the chief constable? According to his senior assistant chief constable, it was an editorial in the Federation magazine, "Police Beat". It said:

"the Federation sees the RUC as an essentially civilian force temporarily armed for its own protection while the troubles

[Sir Eldon Griffiths]

endure. Fighting a guerilla war is no job for an ordinary police officer. It is the job of the military to seek out and destroy the enemy and to provide a secure environment for the operation of the traditional law enforcement agency."

Those, apparently, are the alleged offending words.

I say to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland that this is milk and water stuff compared with the full-blooded editorials that come thundering out of the England and Wales Federation magazine on every issue imaginable from the ineffectiveness of the machine guns issued to the police at London airport to the conduct of senior officers during racial disturbances and riots. The editorial does nothing more than reiterate the official and publicly declared policy of the Federation for the past 17 years, as agreed at its democratically elected annual conference. In evidence given to the Hunt Committee in 1969, the Federation used and published a statement of policy in almost precisely the same words as those objected to.

Why is it that the chief constable takes exception in 1986 to a statement that the Federation has repeatedly made in 1976, 1978, 1983, 1984 and 1985? What is it in these words that can justify the chief constable coming down, like a ton of bricks, and unilaterally washing out the entire regulation that guarantees the Federation's right to speak out? What is wrong with the Federation putting forward its belief that, sooner or later, the Royal Ulster Constabulary should return to unarmed, civilian, policing? Is this not what we all want? Is it not the Government's long term hope and policy?

Let us suppose that the chief constable had other motives and that he was determined for other reasons to slap down the Federation and to discipline Mr. Alan Wright. The chief constable has tried to do this several times before. The police discipline code, as I know from too much experience, is an all-embracing document. If the chief constable believes that Mr. Wright is in breach of it, why does he not charge him with an offence? He could do so, for example, under the regulation dealing with

"bringing the service into disrepute"

or in the catch-all phrase "disreputable conduct."

I am the first to accept that, in any disciplined force, the chief constable must have the ability to charge and try, and, if a man is found guilty, to punish any of his officers who break the discipline code. That is the proper remedy, but is it not the proper remedy for the chief constable to respond to what he considers to be Mr. Wright's error of judgment by abrogating all the Federation's statutory rights. This is the heart of the matter.

The rights and the duties of the Federation belong to all its members — past, present and future. They are collective rights, created by this House; and they cannot be taken away from all the members of the Federation because one member is thought by the chief constable to have stepped out of line. If, against all the evidence, the chief constable believes that Mr. Wright is guilty of any offence, let the chief constable bring charges against him. If he does this, Mr. Wright will be entitled to be informed —which he has not been—of the complaints that are laid against him; to be allowed—as he has not been—to confront his accuser and to be given a fair hearing—again he has not been—in accordance with the proper procedures of the police discipline regulations as laid down by this House.

I do not think that there is a cat in hell's chance of Mr. Wright's being found guilty of any offence in any court that I can imagine. However let us suppose that he was. Would that in any way justify the chief constable's taking away the rights of the other 10,999 RUC police officers and reservists who, by statute, have been given the right, through their Federation, to make representations on any matter concerning their welfare and efficiency? Could one man's error of judgment have justified the imposing of collective punishment on every other member of the force?

The chief constable cannot, and he must not seek to be the arbiter of what another statutory body—the Police Federation—may or may not do in its collective wisdom within the purview of the responsibilities laid upon it by an Act of Parliament. He has no lawful authority to cancel the Federation's right to make representations on welfare and efficiency. He has no business to fly in the face of the will of the House, only so recently restated when all parties acceded to the recommendation of the Edmund Davies Royal Commission, that in matters of welfare and efficiency, the Police Federation enjoys and exercises the freedom to represent its members' view in public.

The central question is what is to be done to put an end to this unseemly quarrel. The short answer is that the chief constable must withdraw his force order. Nothing less will do, for if the order were to be allowed to stand, a number of serious consequences would flow from it. First, free speech would be suppressed—the federation would be both censored and gagged. Secondly, the will of Parliament would be denied. Thirdly, the chief constable's own authority in his own force would be impaired, for the federation has no choice but to continue to exercise its statutory right to speak out in defiance of the Chief Constable's order, and that can do no good to anybody.

There are wider dangers. This action in Ulster, I regret to say, poses a threat to the Police Federations of England and Wales, and of Scotland, which for years have exercised their undoubted right to make representations in public on all matters that affect the welfare and efficiency of their forces. Therefore, I must, with a heavy heart, advise my hon. Friend the Minister, and, through him, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that on this issue the Northern Ireland Police Federation can count on the total support of the Police Federation of England and Wales, the Police Federation of Scotland — mark this well — the Association of Garda Inspectors and Sergeants in the Irish Republic, and of the 500,000-strong International Union of Police Staff Associations. The president of the IUPSA representing police officers in all of western Europe, has already offered to join the chairmen of all the British Police Federations in defending the rights of the Northern Ireland Police Federation.

In short, this affair has all the makings of one of those issues that seem at first to be no more than a minor struggle but which, because of the high principles involved, can easily plunge the Government into a major conflict of principle with the whole of the British police service, not to speak of the European force.

A wise Minister, and I am sure that my hon. Friend wants to be wise in this matter, will do his best, as I am doing, to de-fuse the problem before it gets out of hand. I ask the Minister not to do two things. First, let him not take refuge in dark hints about the Special Branch or the intelligence service reporting to the chief constable that Mr. Wright's observations have assisted the IRA. I have

reason to believe that the material the chief constable says he has received to support that view falls a long way short of sustaining any such argument.

Of course, the IRA's propagandists will seek to turn to their own advantage anything and everything that is said by anyone, but I am quite sure that my hon. Friend is wise and realises that most operational officers in the Special Branch are also members of the police federation. They, too, have an interest in ensuring that the police federation in Northern Ireland is not gagged.

I will say no more about that, because my hon. Friend knows perfectly well what lies behind those remarks. Let him not rely on publishable reports about the federation's comments, for if patriotism, as is sometimes claimed, is the last refuge of the scoundrel, so, too, if I may speak from experience, can chief constables who are in difficulty reach out for Special Branch reports that they know need not be revealed and use them as an excuse for unjust actions.

The second thing I hope my hon. Friend will not do is to attack Mr. Wright. I know how easy it is for hard-pressed Ministers who are seeking a way out of a political impasse that, heaven knows, is not of their making, to try to put the blame on those who do not fall in with their own ideas of compromise. Words like "stubborn" and "unreasonable" all too easily come tumbling out of ministerial mouths when Ministers find themselves face to face with a representative body that has its back to the wall and is determined, as the federation is determined, not to yeild on a fundamental issue of principle.

The Minister's duty, as I see it, is to safeguard the broader national interest and the longer-term relationship between the Government and the representative bodies of all the police federations on this side of the water as well as in Northern Ireland. I respectfully urge him to think carefully before using any words that might be construed as an attack on a body set up by Parliament to represent the 11,000 men and women of the RUC and its reservists. What I am asking the Minister to do is simple. First, let him give a clear commitment to carry out the will of Parliament. This House gave the police federations the right to make representations on behalf of their members and I ask the Minister publicly to acknowledge that. I hope that he will make clear that the Government are bound and will honour, as the chief constable is bound and should honour, both the letter and the spirit of section 17 of the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970.

Second, I ask the Minister to have another word with Sir John Hermon. Let the Minister explain to the chief constable that he will do himself nothing but good if he admits that he has made a mistake. We all make mistakes and it is a characteristic of this House and of the British people that we rarely gloat—on the contrary, we cheer —when a man freely and openly admits that he may have been wrong. The federation did not seek and does not want this damaging fight, and the way to peace between the federation and the chief constable, who I am bound to say precipitated this conflict, is for Sir John to withdraw his order. I hope that he will do that, for if he does not I rear deeply for the well-being of the RUC.

10.34 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I am grateful to the Minister for allowing me a few minutes on this important matter. Rarely has an hon. Member made a more disgraceful attack on the role of the Government and of the police in an Adjournment debate than has the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) tonight.

I read in the newspaper this morning that:

"It was unfair to expect the RUC to impose the Anglo-Irish Agreement when it was opposed by the majority of people in Northern Ireland, the chairman of the Northern Ireland Police Federation, Mr. Alan Wright, said on a BBC television programme broadcast last night."

The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds, a paid representative of the Police Federation, has come here expecting us to oppose the spirit of policies passed by Parliament. That is a most atrocious thing. If ever there was a justification for chief constables' orders—I have in the past been highly critical of the chief constable of the RUC—this is it. It is disgraceful to criticise that policy and to have unnamed members of the RUC, backed by Mr. Wright, going on television and saying:

"We have our Government, deciding in Parliament that there will be an agreement between two sovereign states. It has been demonstrated here that the majority of the law-abiding citizens in Northern Ireland are opposed to it. Now we are caught in the middle of being seen to try and impose an agreement which the large majority of people here don't want. Now that is not a fair position really to put the police into."

I never heard the hon. Gentleman say that throughout the miners' strike when the people of south Yorkshire wanted nothing to do with policy. The hon. Gentleman then talked of upholding the law, upholding the spirit of what the House had passed, the will of the sovereign Parliament, the legislation that had been carried. Tonight, however, the hon. Gentleman comes here and talks about supporting a leader of a Police Federation who goes on television and completely undermines the policies of Her Majesty's Government, the majority in this House, and the majority in the Republic, who aids and succours not reports from the special branch about the IRA but the paramilitaries and the gentlemen who used to sit on this Bench but who are not prepared to accept the majority will of Parliament in which they claim that they should have representation.

The hon. Gentleman, for whom I once had a high regard, should think very carefully about the case that he is advancing. It is an absolute disgrace to him. To bring in the rest of the Police Federation of these islands in this way is absolutely disgusting.

10.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths), who has great knowledge in these matters, set out three priorities. His third priority is my first—it is to try to bring the difference of opinion between the chief constable of the RUC and the Police Federation to a speedy and amicable close.

A great deal of work has been put in by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland to achieve a speedy and amicable solution. I have spoken to the Police Authority, the chief constable, and to representatives of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland to try to resolve the matter. By the time of this debate, it has not been possible to achieve that.

Despite the terms in which my hon. Friend raised the debate, if he will be fair, he will recognise that, whereas the federation has an unfettered right to talk about matters concerning the welfare and efficiency of the force, the

[Mr. Nicholas Scott]

chief constable must be responsible for the operational activities of the RUC, and it can only be the chief constable who decides where they overlap.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: No.

Mr. Scott: Well, my hon. Friend may disagree.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Of course.

Mr. Scott: Perhaps my hon. Friend will listen for a moment while I develop the argument. The circumstances of Northern Ireland as they are and have been for the past 16 years and the efforts and sacrifices of the RUC and its members must cry out for an early and amicable solution of this question. Nobody wants it to drag on. I shall not call special branch reports in argument. We have only to read *Republican News* to see how the interests of our enemies—the enemies of every policeman in Northern Ireland, Ministers and every Member of Parliament but one, who does not take his seat—are being served and ours are not by this dispute. The sooner we can bring it to an end, the better.

I do not want to go into great detail over the background to this on this side of the water or in Northern Ireland. It was clearly envisaged that the Police Federation would be largely concerned with matters of pay, allowances and related conditions of service, and would act in these matters through negotiating and consultative machinery. Although there have been changes over the years in this machinery, which I acknowledge, its primary function in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the United Kingdom remains that of representing federation members in matters affecting police welfare and efficiency. That is clearly set out in the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, and the regulations of 1971 make that quite explicit.

Quite contrary to what my hon. Friend has been expounding, the right of the Police Federation to represent its members in matters concerning their welfare and efficiency is not at issue here. Its representative position is enshrined in law and it is underscored by the existence of comprehensive arrangements, of a formal and informal character, for consultations and negotiations within the RUC and at national level on matters affecting the welfare and efficiency of its members.

The issue, as I have tried to say, is the extent to which the freedom of the Police Association and its constituent members to make public statements should properly be circumscribed to avoid impinging on matters of force operational policy. Those are clearly outwith the scope of its statutory representative role.

Nobody is trying to gag the Police Federation. That is an emotive, divisive and, I believe, even unjustified allegation. The chief constable's decision to cancel regulation 35 of section 22 of the RUC code was not intended to be conclusive. It has been made clear to the Police Association, and to the federation in particular, that this was a temporary suspension of part of the code while consideration was being given to an amending regulation clarifying these matters on which the Police Association, and not just the federation, could properly represent its members.

The RUC is a disciplined service. It has to be under the direction and control of the chief constable. This involves a hierarchy, a tradition of obedience to orders, and the control by senior officers of operational matters. It cannot be otherwise. It must be for the chief constable to determine whether public statements made by any member of the force would be at odds with his operational responsibilities and control. Of course it is important that the line should be drawn as clearly and fairly as possible.

If I may say so, over the past weeks—I say this carefully to my hon. Friend—no effort has been spared to find a mutually acceptable solution. I want to pay a very warm tribute to the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, and especially its chairman, Sir Myles Humphreys, for the efforts which they have put in to conciliate in this matter. They were concerned to have this unfortunate episode resolved quickly and in the best interests of all the members of the police force. They have sought to encourage everybody to go down this road, and I am disappointed that their effort has not been better rewarded.

The Police Authority, I understand, has devised a formula which would have given all parties an opportunity to reassess their respective positions without any sacrifice of principle as an interim measure while discussions went on to see whether this could be resolved round the table. It is not for me to disclose details of the proposal at this stage. The last thing I want to do is in any way to prejudice any further discussions which may take place. However, I think it is only fair to point out that three of the four parties—the chief constable, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Superintendents' Association—agreed this proposal. Only the federation has rejected it.

I very much hope that, when this debate is out of the way, we can again get round the table. The Police Authority and Sir Myles Humphreys have made it clear that they wish to be able to arbitrate in this matter and to provide a forum within which discussions can take place to resolve the problem. It serves nobody's interests that it should drag on. The overriding priority for any of us who have any concern with the RUC in Northern Ireland must be the defeat of terrorism. We have provided the manpower, the resources and the equipment; and policemen are providing the skill, the commitment and dedication and, indeed, the lives to defeat that terrorism. I know as well as my hon. Friend does of the loss of life and the injuries which have been endured by the RUC in its efforts to defeat terrorism. The people of Northern Ireland recognise those qualities in their police force. They know that the police have endured the most vicious campaign of terrorist assassination. They have unparalleled policing responsibilities and the difficulties associated with those responsibilities.

Let us, for heaven's sake, after this debate is over, get all the parties involved in this unfortunate dispute around a table and see that we can resolve it so that it does no long-term damage to a force of which the House has every right to be proud, as does every member of it. The dispute must and can be resolved. The door to the solution is open, if only people will now get together with the Police Authority under the chairmanship of Sir Myles Humphreys to find a way forward.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 21 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Chamber (Clock)

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. There will be no need for me to remind you of the mysticism which prevails upon me from time to time issuing from the procedures of the House. You will have gathered from some of the errors that I have made during my short time in the House that I get puzzled, not least by some of the horological aspects of its business. I ask you to recall the incident at the end of the main business yesterday when the light-emitting digital diodes displaying the time were working backwards. I am aware that the Government are intent on turning back the clock, perhaps rewriting history and maybe even redefining truthfulness in the process. However, may I prevail upon you to bring to bear your good offices on the authorities responsible for the timepieces to ensure that they do not behave in a similar fashion today? Perhaps, at the same time, they might give some attention to the number three main lift in Norman Shaw north, which is equally exasperating.

Mr. Speaker: I am aware that the clock on my left went into reverse towards the end of business yesterday. I do not think that it had anything to do with the Government. It has been put right this morning. I take note of what the hon. Gentleman said about the lift in Norman Shaw north.

PETITIONS

Havengore Bridge

9.36 am

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): I beg to ask leave to present two petitions. One is from 71 business men and persons having cause to visit Foulness island in my constituency requesting that Havengore bridge, which is the only means of access to the island, be promptly replaced.

The bridge was built in Germany and transported to Foulness island secondhand in 1921. As the island is a military area, the bridge is the property of the Ministry of Defence. The petition points out that the bridge is old and in bad condition. The lifting mechanism which should enable ships to pass underneath it is worn out and does not work. The bridge is unsafe and loads crossing the bridge have to be broken down into small packets incurring considerable costs to business people. Also, there are delays due to single line traffic on the bridge and the compulsory long spacing between vehicles crossing. The petition is signed by farmers, shopkeepers, teachers, contractors, grain merchants, agricultural engineers, millers, councillors, suppliers, tradesmen and craftsmen.

The second petition, on the same subject, is signed by 98 per cent. of the residents of Foulness island—172 people. It makes the same point about the poor condition of the bridge and refers to the fact that the bridge is frequently closed, sometimes for weeks, thus locking the islanders into the island or away from their homes from 7 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock at night. They also point out that there is restricted access for emergency services, and the vital work of rebuilding the sea defences is being severely curtailed. I should like to associate myself with those remarks. The petitions conclude:

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that the hon. Members of the House of Commons should bear in mind the inconvenience and expense incurred by the existing bridge. We ask that they should therefore urge the Minister of Defence that he should recommend to the House the urgent replacement of Havengore Bridge. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

To lie upon the Table.

Radioactive Waste (Humberside)

9.39 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I beg to ask leave to present the first and the smallest of many petitions that will come from the county of Humberside with the support of tens of thousands of signatures. I am presenting the petition today because an announcement is due next week about a list of possible nuclear dumps. My constituents would prefer changes to be made to the list after full consideration of all relevant factors, including public opinion, rather than as a result of behind-the-scenes pressure from members of the Cabinet. The petition, therefore, is a warning shot. It reads:

The humble petition of the people of Great Grimsby and parts round about Sheweth that the undersigned are totally and absolutely opposed to any proposal to locate any radioactive waste storage or disposal facility within the County of Humberside and consider that any such facility would relegate the area, designating it as more suitable for dangerous dumping than for development.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for the Environment in no circumstances to authorise any such dumping or any survey work to assess suitability for the establishment of any nuclear waste dump within the County."

I cannot endorse that petition strongly enough. My constituents and others round about my constituency feel bitter and angry at the possibility of having a 300 yard blight inflicted on their area. I ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to think again, because we shall resist bitterly and angrily until the end.

To lie upon the Table.

Orders of the Day

Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill

Order for Second Reading read

9.41 am

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is the second time within the comparatively short period that I have been a Member of this place that I have had the extreme good fortune of drawing among the top names in the private Member's Bill ballot. Some seven years ago, almost immediatedly upon arrival, I found myself in the happy position of introducing a Bill. The House will probably recall that it contained the proposition that public houses should be allowed to remain open on the basis of flexible hours and should be allowed to have family rooms. I failed to win the support of the House then, but I have good reason to believe that the Government are likely to promote a similar measure in the not-too-distant future. I hope that, better late than never, such a measure will be placed on the statute book.

More relevantly, I trust that it will not be eight years before the Bill is enacted. I am quite confident that my right hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench are in fuller support of this measure than they were seven years ago of my previous Bill.

It is a simple Bill which is aimed at extending the provisions of civil defence, which were initially ruled by the Civil Defence Act 1948, so that the civil defence organisation and its personnel may be used for peacetime emergencies as well as those of wartime. Three years after the second world war those who were then in authority did not think beyond the military measures which were needed to defend our country against such disasters. Having, happily, enjoyed many years of peace, it is now time to turn our attention less to wartime measures and more to peacetime needs while never forgetting the possibility that we may once again be embroiled in war, however much we all wish to avoid that fate.

The Bill is designed to encourage, but not to enforce, the use of civil defence personnel in the fighting of peacetime disasters. I shall explain the background to the Bill, but before doing so I should like to thank those who have helped me in its preparation. I thank especially my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office and his officials, who have been extremely helpful in drafting the Bill and in my consultations with them in determining precisely how I should go about putting the Bill before the House. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), who suggested that I should take up the Bill. His invaluable help has supported me throughout its preparation and I welcome his presence in the Chamber today.

I thank Mr. Tony Hibbert and the National Council for Civil Defence, whose parliamentary representative I was proud to be about six years ago and whose work in the preparation and encouragement of civil defence has been extremely necessary. It has been the bulwark on which civil defence has advanced over the past few years. Last, but by no means least, I thank Mr. Eric Alley, whose civil defence work at Easingwold in advising the Home Office and assisting me with the Bill has been invaluable.

The background to the Bill arises from the Civil Defence Act 1948, in which a civil defence corps was set up to provide a disaster mechanism whereby the civilian population could be helped in the event of Britain being attacked by another power. Sadly, that organisation was disbanded in 1968 when a Government of a different persuasion from the present Administration felt that there was no longer a military or wartime need for such an organisation. I hope that the Opposition now see the importance and value of such an organisation for dealing with peacetime disasters. The skeleton force which remained after the civil defence corps was disbanded was still in existence, but only just, in 1979. Government expenditure at that date was about £20 million in support of the civil defence organisation.

In 1980, a Conservative sub-committee was set up under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Clark), who is now the Minister for Trade. Its remit was to examine civil defence needs. I was happy to serve as a member of the committee. It considered the needs of the civil defence organisation and what should be done to promote it in terms of wartime preparations only. It reported to Viscount Whitelaw, who was the then Home Secretary. I am glad to say that many of the committee's recommendations have been implemented by the Government and that over the past few years there has been a steady improvement in the back-up facilities of civil defence in the training at Easingwold and in the numbers of those who are involved in the organisation.

The real breakthrough did not come until 1983, when the Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations set out clear duties for local authorities in the setting up of civil defence organisations in their own areas. Many of the provisions within the regulations are relevant to the peacetime operation of civil defence functions and I hope to illustrate that.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): My hon. Friend will be aware of all the dicussions that took place before the regulations were made. It is unfortunate that many local authorities are still evading their responsibilities under them. I welcome my hon. Friend's Bill, but I fear that by its nature it may not be able to force recalcitrant local authorities to carry out their duties. Does my hon. Friend think that his Bill might engender the attitude that civil defence is not about wartime planning alone? Does he believe that it will lead to a realisation that civil defence involves planning generally and that there is no reason why political authorities, even of persuasions different from ours as Conservative Members, should oppose it?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I acknowledge my hon. Friend's great expertise in civil defence matters and the great amount of work that he has put into them. I accept that the Bill's provisions will not force local authorities to undertake the peacetime use of their civil defence organisations. I regret that in some ways, but I feel that my objective is better won by persuasion than by force. I hope that we shall encourage individuals to volunteer and local authorities to fulfil more willingly their duties under the 1983 regulations and set up civil defence organisations that will be effective even in those zones that have been so misguidedly described as nuclear-free.

As I have said, the breakthrough came in 1983 with the civil defence regulations and the Government's undertaking to adopt an all-hazards approach to civil defence. That breakthrough has been embraced by the Bill. It was decided that the civil defence organisation should become a larger body and one capable of dealing with emergencies that arise out of wartime or peacetime disasters, as well as encouraging local authorities to prepare for any emergencies and to ensure that the co-operation of their local emergency services, local authority services and volunteers is such that there is a readiness and ability at any time to respond to emergencies.

The obvious question is whether and to what extent the 1983 regulations are relevant to peacetime disasters. Some of them are clearly not, because they are designed to deal with war. One example is the provision for the preparation of shelters. However, seven of the 12 regulations in schedule 2 are relevant. I shall deal with them in detail. Paragraph 5 states:

"plans should be made for providing a service for the rescue of people in damaged buildings. Such plans should draw together the resources of fire brigades, works and engineering directorates, voluntary organisations, civil defence volunteers and private sector civil engineering firms."

I can think of no more concise definition of the way in which a local authority should prepare itself for the type of emergency which might happen at any time in any place.

Paragraph 6 states:

"plans should be made for the billeting and temporary accommodation and maintenance of people made homeless by attack."—

and by any other disaster.

Paragraph 7 states:

"plans should be made for the prevention of disease and of the spread of disease, particularly for emergency sanitation and removal and disposal of refuse likely to case a hazard to public health."

In the event of flooding or other such disaster that type of service will be necessary to deal with the aftermath.

Paragraph 9 states:

"plans should be made for the distribution, conservation and control of food and the provision of emergency feeding services for those . . . who are without food or the means of preparing it."

Paragraph 10 states:

"plans should be made for work services for the urgent repair, replacement, demolition or clearance of land, buildings or roads. Local authorities have their own engineering works services, but their plans will need to include arrangements to use other appropriate resources outside their normal peacetime control and the regional arrangements."

Paragraph 11 states:

"plans should be made for the provision and maintenance of services essential to the life of the community other than those mentioned in the preceding paragraphs."

Paragraph 12 states:

"plans should be made for the participation in civil defence of voluntary organisations".

Sir John Farr (Harborough): We are anxious for my hon. Friend's useful Bill to be put on the statute book as soon as possible. He has given a list of so many possibilities using a wartime network of facilities which could be used in peacetime. Perhaps in Committee we can add a schedule illustrating the type of incidents for which such facilities might be used.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that suggestion. We could certainly examine that possibility in Committee. However, such a schedule might be more exclusive than helpful because it might then be possible to say that because an incident is not listed in the schedule the facilities cannot be used. I shall examine the suggestion closely in Committee.

The 1983 regulations impose a statutory duty upon local authorities to train and organise. That duty is contained in regulation 4(1)*(f)*. The specific duties spelt out in detail are that local authorities should undertake the recruitment, organisation, training and exercising of civil defence volunteers to provide vital humanitarian and support services within the community in time of war. Under my Bill, that duty will remain. The Bill does not impose a duty on local authorities to use those services in peacetime, but it removes the prohibition in the 1948 Act under which local authorities cannot use those services in peacetime. It will enable local authorities to use such services normally if they wish.

It is a sad fact that only 9,000 volunteers are serving in the civil defence reserves. About 2,000 of those are in Devon, so only 7,000 cover the country outside that county. That is clearly inadequate to deal with the many emergencies that might arise in peacetime, let alone with what might happen to our civilian population should we have the misfortune to come under attack.

In addition to the 9,000 volunteers, 1,200 scientific advisers give their knowledge voluntarily to local authorities and try to assist with some of the difficult scientific questions with which they have to grapple in the complications of defence.

I have not mentioned the WRVS and the St. John ambulance brigade which have an extremely important part to play in peacetime and wartime emergencies. They already exist and are outside the Bill's scope.

If the Bill is passed, one of the primary advantages will be to encourage people to volunteer for the civil defence reserves. We all hope that there will not be another war. I am glad that the threat of such a war seems remote to most people, although on my wireless yesterday as I drove to the House I heard a programme in which it was said that the young people of Britain are more concerned than adults about the danger of a European war. We are attempting to safeguard their future and they are most likely to volunteer for such a service.

I hope that we can encourage the recruitment and training of young people so that their skills can be used not only if there is a war but on a regular basis in peacetime emergencies which affect their local communities. I hope that we shall be able to convert the 9,000 to more than 100,000. We need that number if we are to cover the ground so that the service can be of help throughout the land.

I shall deal in detail with the circumstances in which a civil defence organisation can be useful in peacetime. I shall attempt to illustrate that need with what has been happening here and abroad.

The Government are aware of the possibility of such an organisation being needed and they believe that it would be useful. My noble Friend Lord Elton took up the matter in a debate instigated by Lord Renton, who pressed for precisely this type of legislation. Lord Elton said:

"The expertise, the emergency planning teams and the industrial emergency services officers, the emergency plans for such things as emergency feeding and housing and other forms of care, the county and district emergency centres with their widespread communications links, the well-established liaison arrangements with the police, fire and ambulance service, and the involvement of volunteers already trained to act in grave

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

emergencies, ought also to be available in time of peace, and we remain absolutely committed to legislation." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 6 February 1985; Vol. 459, c. 1091-2.]

The type of emergency of which Lord Elton was thinking and of which I am thinking today can arise out of two causes—natural disaster or man-made disaster. We tend to be a little complacent about natural disasters because we are mercifully spared the appalling horrors of volcano, flood, hurricane and tornado. Sometimes we underplay the danger that we face.

During harsh winters we suffer severely from blizzards, floods and gales. Between the Humber and Thames estuaries about 250,000 people are at risk from flooding. It is now 33 years since the last great disaster on the east coast. At that time the damage was great and several lives were lost. I shall add a little more detail to that at the end of my speech.

More recently, in 1978, floods and gales in the west country caused widespread damage. The Devon volunteer service was called out, as it frequently is on a local basis, to deal with that emergency. The service it gave was acknowledged by all to be invaluable in helping to avert the full horrors of the crisis which might otherwise have occurred.

My grandmother lived in Dorset until, sadly, she died two or three years ago. In 1978 she lived in a bungalow on top of a hill which was covered in snow. She was unable to get in or out of her bungalow for over a week. She was over 90 at the time, but mercifully she was well prepared for such emergencies, having lived there for a long time and being a sensible lady. However, some old people are not capable of making provision to ride out such weather hazards. If we have no volunteer service, no prepared organisation with adequate personnel to travel round and ensure that elderly people in their homes are properly protected and fed and warm, then we shall lose many lives quite unnecessarily.

The use of the Devon volunteer service in cases like that, and because they are entirely voluntary, can be justified but there is no statutory backing for a local authority using the service in that way and there is a danger that should such use cost public money, somebody who, for whatever reason, decided to obstruct the use of voluntary help at such times, could take out an injunction and would have a good chance of preventing the use of such voluntary help. Clearly, that would be in the interests of no one and I am sure that the use of such services meets with the whole-hearted opprobrium of hon. Members in all parts of the House. But the danger of someone preventing the use of help in that way is real and we must recognise it and deal with it.

In 1976 hurricanes caused extensive damage in Sheffield and Glasgow. That proves that we are not wholly immune from natural disasters, and when we face them the volunteer services have a great role to play. More relevant are the man-made disasters that happen as a result of human or mechanical failing. This is an immensely complicated and every day more dangerous world in which we are creating things largely for the benefit of mankind but also sometimes, unfortunately, to our detriment. Perhaps I could give some examples. There have been many disasters abroad where volunteer help of this kind was essential.

At Seveso, dioxin escaped from a chemical plant and vast numbers of people were severely injured. At Bhopal when methylisocyanate escaped, 2,500 people died and 200,000 were injured. We all hope that no such disaster could possibly happen here, but we have plants where equally dangerous chemicals—indeed that very chemical — are stored, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, through error, or as a result of mechanical failure, we might suffer a disaster on that scale. If we did, I am quite sure we are not remotely in a position to deal with it properly.

At Flixborough in 1974, 12,000 people were put at risk following an explosion at a factory. Some 1,800 houses were damaged and 5,000 people had to be evacuated. That placed our system under enormous stress. I say with confidence that if the proposals in this Bill had been available and had been acted upon locally, a great deal of hardship and suffering could have been avoided. I ask the House to imagine the greater disaster that occurred in Mississauga in Canada a few years ago when as a result of a rail crash there was a similar chemical leakage. A vast gas cloud hung over a local town and 218,000 people had to be evacuated within 24 hours or they would have been at risk of their lives. That could happen here, and if it does, how will we deal with it? I fear that the answer at the moment is that we do not have any kind of service capable or prepared to deal with such emergencies.

Sir John Farr: I am following my hon. Friend's speech with great interest. What he is telling the House is disturbing, because it seems that we are not at all prepared to deal with an emergency of the type he has illustrated. Is the House right in assuming that his research has shown that if we were to get an aggravated discharge at Sellafield we would not be able to cope with it?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am quite certain that my hon. Friend is correct. We have no adequate preparation to deal with a massive escape of radioactivity and that is one of the things that most frightens our people. I will not pretend that the setting up of the volunteer type of organisation that I am proposing, or that by encouraging the use of our civil defence services, we shall be able to solve such a problem at a stroke. Any major leak of radioactivity would be beyond the scope of my proposals. However, we ought to be much better prepared to deal with such disasters than we are at present.

Perhaps I could return from the megadisasters of that type to the ones that we have experienced. At the Humber estuary in 1983 there was massive oil pollution, and the volunteer services there were used. The civil defence headquarters and emergency communications system was used to great effect in helping to get rid of the oil pollution and to limit the amount of damage. I should stress that at that time the emergency services were on call and used for 15 days.

One of the most useful ways in which the civil defence organisation can be used to public benefit during such emergencies is to remote from the ordinary local authority administration the sudden burden of dealing with such disasters, because such disasters can take a long time to deal with. As I have said, it took 15 days to deal with that one and at Flixborough it took three months to clear up after the disaster. During the whole of such time the headquarters and communication network of the civil

defence can step in and take over so that the local authority can continue the difficult and full time task of ordinary administration in its area.

I do not need to remind the House of the appalling tragedy at Aberfan in 1966 when 144 people, of whom 116 were children, were killed. At that time the civil defence organisation was used to assist, but the administration of the assistance was poor. An effective volunteer service and its effective administration at that time could have done a lot to alleviate the appalling suffering in the aftermath of that disaster. More locally still in terms of going down the scale of disasters from nuclear to the less serious disasters, train crashes happen frequently. We have not yet had aircraft crashes, but by the law of probability one is bound to occur some day in some built-up area. Such disasters call for the kind of emergency services that I hope this Bill will serve to promote.

I cannot put better the need for such services or their value than what was said by the then Lord Mayor of London when he spoke after the 1953 floods. At that time a civil defence corps had been set up under the 1948 Act, and that corps was effective. In 1953 the Lord Mayor said:

"The emergency proved the value of having thousands of trained workers capable of dealing with the many human and physical problems that have to be solved and dealt with in a disaster of any kind. Britain has never lacked volunteer workers in any emergency that may arise, and splendid work is carried out by all, but organisation and training more than double their effectiveness. The exacting work carried out by civil defence in that great disaster tested methods on control, rescue and welfare to the utmost, and has shown they are sound.

That was so in 1953, but it is definitely not so today. I trust that in supporting this Bill the House will enable us to move back to a position where we have a nationwide emergency service for the protection of our people.

10.9 am

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I congratulate the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on his speech and on the sensible Bill that he has introduced. I welcome it, and I was grateful for the opportunity to add my name to the list of sponsors, which is an all-party one.

Emergency planning for peace and wartime disasters has many common ingredients, so the Bill's all-hazards approach must be commended. Homelessness resulting from flood or fire is every bit as tragic as homelessness caused by high explosive attacks, and both must tackled promptly and efficiently. I deliberately avoid using the comparison of nuclear attack, because it is too horrific to contemplate. I speak as one who visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the winter of 1945-46.

As the hon. Member for Upminster asked bluntly, are we adequately prepared for a serious accident at one of our nuclear power stations? I believe that we are probably more prepared than he gave us credit for, because the armed services, the fire brigade and the ambulance services have some training in this regard. However, we must pay more attention to the matter. We must also consider a hydroelectric dam burst or a chemical explosion such as that at Flixborough. Examples from other countries must make us look to our laurels. There were two huge examples of that, the most recent one in Italy.

Despite the magnificent standards of service provided by the fire brigade, police and ambulance service, there is a need for trained civil protection volunteers in each community and the provision of effective community emergency plans. Therefore, we should all welcome the all-hazards approach of the Bill, which was earlier advocated in the "Civil Defence Briefing Guide", which I recommended to hon. Members if they have not already read it. It has been updated by a leafet entitled "Civil Protection: The Way Ahead". As the original guide said:

"Effective civil defence can be created only if it has the support of the general public. This requires a major effort in public relations."

I am sure that that is right.

The rationale should be presented as the need to plan for the protection and recovery of all individuals from the effects of all hazards in peace or in war. The case for civil protection is valid, even without reference to the nuclear deterrent. It is important for local authorities, especially county councils, to identify all areas that could be affected by a major peacetime disaster and for the Government to ensure that local authorities are adequately resourced for that purpose.

I speak in the debate before the Minister, but I understand that the Government are allowing the 75 per cent. grant that goes to local authorities to be used for dual purposes in peace or wartime defence. However, I should be happier if the Home Office met the full cost of local staffing. That plea comes from the chief executive of the Isle of Wight county council, Mr. John Horsnell, who may be well known as the chairman of the SOLACE committee of the local authorities and an expert on civil defence. It would help my county council, which I led until recently, especially at budget time. When cuts are the order of the day, this becomes a controversial issue. But if the cost of staffing could be met fully, that argument could be nicely avoided.

For my sins, I am a rapporteur to the Council of Europe. I am conducting an inquiry with the Conservative Member of the European Parliament for York, Mr. McMillan Scott, on disasters affecting our heritage. He has a special interest because of the terrible fire in York Minster. There have been some terrible fires affecting buildings of considerable historic interest in recent years, including one in Luxembourg and two at Trinity college, Dublin. At the beginning of December, we held a hearing in Brussels.

We hope that the inquiry will produce reports back to the Council of Europe and the European Parliament in which we can work out a common code of guidance, not just for the European Community, but for the 21 states of the Council of Europe. We are looking a long way ahead, but we heard evidence from experts not just on fires, which are the main disasters in Britain, but on earthquakes and volcano eruptions, which are especially centred in Italy. It is a move in the right direction. If we can put our house in order and obtain a common approach in Europe, civil defence will fall into line. It should be part of the common code of guidance.

The hon. Member for Upminster has said all that should be said on this issue, and no doubt other hon. Members will contribute to the debate. I congratulate him on introducing the Bill and I congratulate the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) on his efforts in this area. I would not have been in the House today, speaking as I have, were it not for his persuasion. I wish the Bill a speedy passage on to the statute book.

10.15 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) and those who have supported him on promoting the Bill,

[Sir Hector Monro]

which I hope will have a speedy passage through the House and will be implemented by local authorities at the earliest opportunity.

As my hon. Friend said, civil defence stems from the united efforts of many organisations during the second world war, including the wardens, the auxiliary fire services, the Home Guard, the WRVS, the Red Cross, the St. John Ambulance service, and, of course, the police. After the war, individuals joined the civil defence service and worked towards keeping that organisation on the top line. That was confirmed by the 1948 Act and administered thereafter by county councils. I was the civil defence commissioner for south-west Scotland, so I saw the outstanding work of the civil defence service in training and preparation and the first-class operational headquarters for my area. There were regular visits to Taymouth castle, the Scottish civil defence training college, and members of the civil defence force were highly trained and well qualified to do the work.

Civil defence worked well during the 1950s and 1960s and was available, as my hon. Friend said, for action in civil emergencies. We had close co-operation with other local authorities. South-west Scotland co-operated closely with what used to be Cumberland county council. I have no doubt that, had there been a disaster, the force would have been efficient and effective. As my hon. Friend said, one never knows how horrific a disaster can be. Sadly, my constituency had the worst train disaster in the United Kingdom—at Gretna Green during the first world war—when more than 400 soldiers were killed on their way to the front. Had there been an effective civil defence service at the time, I am sure that some lives would have been saved. Many of those poor soldiers were burned in the wooden carriages. Had an effective fire service been near at hand, many lives could have been saved.

My hon. Friend was right to highlight the possibility, although we wish never to see it, of a major air disaster or, indeed, a major fire, flood or other natural disaster. We all agree to an extent that the value of civil defence has been reduced slightly by the increasing importance of the public protection services—the fire brigade, ambulance service and police — which are highly efficient. The Health Service also provides first-class protection.

We need to highlight the advantage of having a very large number of highly trained volunteers who are prepared to give their time and to take over responsibility at the shortest possible notice. That is crucially important after any kind of accident, even if it is only a car accident. Somebody needs to be on the spot to take responsibility —whether it be a member of the public or somebody who has been trained in civil defence—so that all of the rescue services can be brought into action as quickly as possible.

Civil defence is vital throughout the country. It is astonishing that some local authorities want to declare nuclear-free zones and to ban civil defence from their territory. They are behaving irresponsibly towards their electors. The nuclear bomb is another matter. Like the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), I, too, went to Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. I accept that civil defence could do very little to mitigate that kind of disaster. However, it might be able to mitigate the effects of such a disaster on the fringes of the affected area. Civil defence help after a disaster of that kind would be of great value.

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): Does my hon. Friend agree that the horror of Hiroshima was due to the enormous fire that raged through the city and that its enormity was largely because the houses were made of wood? Therefore, the effect of the fire after the dropping of the nuclear bomb was quite different from the effect of a fire if a nuclear bomb were to be dropped on a city that was constructed of more robust material.

Sir Hector Monro: That is true, When I visited Hiroshima and Nagasaki I found that there were acres and acres of complete devastation, with occasionally a concrete building still standing above the wreckage. Fire was the serious result of high-explosive bombardment in other cities that I visited in Japan — for example, in Tokyo and Yokohama — apart from the nuclear bombardment.

I believe firmly in the nuclear deterrent. It means that we shall never have to face the horrors of a nuclear war. We must bear that in mind when considering civil defence. Civil defence will be of primary value when dealing with civil catastrophes. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster highlighted the civil catastrophes at Bhopal, Seveso and Mexico City. I would add the disaster last year at Bradford City football ground. No more could have been done, in the time available, to save more lives. We were impressed by the effectiveness of the public protection service. It was able to come very speedily to the aid of those who were involved in that frightful fire.

One must also commend the large number of people who give voluntary service to our nation. They are members of the Territorial Army, other reserve forces, the Red Cross, the Women's Royal Voluntary Service and many other important voluntary services that do such wonderful work in this country. There are many enthusiastic people who gladly give up their time to learn about civil defence and play their part in preparing for any catastrophe, however, unlikely that might be.

The Bill is important. I hope it will persuade those local authorities who have decided to opt out of civil defence to reverse their decision and to provide the civil defence services that are so urgently required. The Bill ought to be given a speedy passage. I hope that the Government will be as generous as they can in providing financial help to local authorities for this purpose. Therefore I commend to the House my hon. Friend's Bill.

10.25 am

Mr. Robert Banks (Harrogate): I join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on introducing his Bill. I am happy to be associated with it as a sponsor. I wish to pay tribute to the work of the old civil defence corps, which has long since been disbanded. It provided a most valuable service both during and after the war. It ensured that the idea of civil defence was retained in the mind of the public. This was necessary because at that time there was a great fear that war could break out again. That kind of service is typified in many of our voluntary organisations. It is based upon hard work and dedication. Service is given without any financial return or without any thought of financial return.

There is also a willingness to undertake sometimes dangerous work without thought for the individual's own safety.

I hope that the Bill will have a safe passage through the House. It will have important effects. It will help the public to become aware of the importance of becoming civil defence volunteers. More people are desperately needed to take an interest in the subject. Although certain local authorities have adopted a negative attitude and have not organised themselves properly for civil defence, others have done so extremely well. I am very happy to be able to tell the House that the North Yorkshire county council has well advanced plans for the implementation of a local voluntary civil defence service. They should be viewed by other local authorities in the context of what would be involved if there were a civil disaster in their area, or if the threat of war should arise. This country takes matters of this kind very seriously and it is well organised to deal with disasters. When there is a disaster we have the means at our disposal to deal with it. That is why the Bill is important. It means that local authorities will be able to draw upon the full resources that are available to them to deal with an emergency.

I do not wish to tempt misfortune by adding additional disasters to the list of disasters that have already been so well described. It is possible to go down a path of endless horrors and to cite what has happened in other countries. For example, the hurricane that swept along the east coast of the United States posed a major problem. Over a million people were evacuated from New York because it was anticipated that the hurricane would strike the city. Fortunately, we do not experience hurricanes of that severity, but occasionally there is a great flood or another weather catastrophe that imposes an enormous strain on both individuals and the services upon which they rely. That is where volunteers will be helpful.

At this time of the year, with its "cold wave", it is rather pleasant to think of the 1976 heat wave. There was a serious fire threat in addition to the threat posed by the shortage of water. The water boards handled the problem well by putting in standpipes. Organisations arranged to deliver buckets of water to old people's houses and flats. Such an emergency could arise again and local authorities would be able to act more easily with the assistance of civil defence volunteers.

A noxious substance could infiltrate into the water supplies and people would have to be advised not to drink the water. You may recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, only a short time ago, this problem occurred in the Palace of Westminster when a secretary drank water that had been contaminated by cleaning fluid. She was unwell for a period, but I am glad to say that she was not incapacitated too long. If that incident in the Palace of Westminster were blown up on a wider scale — with chemicals from factories seeping into the water supplies—it would be necessary to mobilise all the volunteers at our disposal to advise people on the action to take.

A number of people are rightly worried that, one day, there might be a rabies scare in Britain. It has been said that the Channel tunnel link could result in infected rats or dogs coming through the tunnel and starting a rabies epidemic. That is going too far. The Government are keen to ensure that every measure is taken to prevent that, and I am confident that that will be done. However, if there were a rabies outbreak, it would be helpful if local authorities could mobilise civil defence authorities to warn people what they should look out for and to work in the areas where the outbreak has occurred to ensure that any carrier of the disease that could be identified was immediately destroyed.

I shall not delay the House with further examples of the emergencies that could arise because they have been well put already. The House understands that there is a need for volunteers to be utilised to assist during these civil emergencies.

Training will be important. It is incumbent on local authorities to extend the scope of training to include the actions that volunteers will have to take if they are brought in to deal with a civil emergency. I hope that the Government will dig into the public purse to find the funds necessary to assist in this training to ensure that it is conducted adequately, comprehensively and nationally. These disasters can occur anywhere in the United Kingdom.

I very much hope that the Bill will be passed and that we can ensure that as many people as possible are involved in assisting those who could be affected should any awful disaster occur.

10.33 am

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I should like to join hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on introducing such a sensible Bill. He is an experienced hand in enjoying success in the ballot for private Member's Bills. He has obviously learnt that one has a greater chance of success if a Bill is not too long. This is a short Bill, but it contains what is needed. Although I have recommended my hon. Friend to add a schedule in Committee, I hasten to say that I would withdraw that suggestion if it were to delay the legislation's progress.

I intervened during the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster to ask him whether our civil defence services in their present state could cope with an aggravated discharge from the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria. My hon. Friend said that he felt that the existing civil defence network was not adequate to deal with that eventuality. That is worrying. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) said that we shall never suffer a direct nuclear attack by another country if we remain armed with our own nuclear deterrent—I fully share that view—but there is always the chance that an accident will occur in peacetime involving dangerous nuclear material, such as that reprocessed at Sellafield. For a long time, a large public inquiry has been taking place into the new PWR nuclear generating station at Sizewell. Like most hon. Members, I recognise that Britain has to have a large nuclear generating capacity. We probably lag behind our European competitors. I think that, with a big nuclear capacity, we would be far less likely to suffer aggravated pollution of the atmosphere, the effects of acid rain and all the other problems.

The Sizewell plant was to change the character of British nuclear generation. Instead of generating electricity by a well-proven Magnox or AGR nuclear generator, which have been safe and effective, Sizewell has been engaged in an entirely new venture, switching over to PWR—the type of reactor that is used around the world because of its relative cheapness. That reactor does not have the same safety record that Magnox and the AGR enjoy.

[Sir John Farr]

We must always be prepared in peacetime for civil emergencies of any type. In referring to the manner in which we generate electricity by nuclear means, I was seeking to point out that a change in policy from AGR and Magnox to PWR could bring added dangers. Many other unforeseen emergencies could arise in peacetime. After all, if we could foresee those emergencies, they would not be emergencies. We cannot foresee what natural or manmade disasters will befall us in peacetime.

I suggest that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, who is such a beaver for work, should consider introducing another civil defence Bill. The present civil defence legislation dates back to 1948. The Civil Defence Act 1948 was concerned merely with getting people into shelters. More emphasis should be placed on the fact that the Bill, and any new civil defence legislation that my hon. Friend the Minister introduces, are designed to prepare not only for the unlikely emergency of a nuclear attack but for the far more likely peacetime emergencies. That legislation would perform a useful role on the statute book. The Bill would be widely supported on both sides of the House and it is common sense that it should be introduced today.

I should like to examine the Bill in more detail. Provisions for civil defence in this country were included in the Conservative party election manifesto in 1983. As my hon. Friend the Member for Upminister said, in that manifesto, the Government intended to amend the Civil Defence Act 1948

"to enable civil defence funds to be used in safeguarding against peacetime emergencies as well as against hostile attacks".

We have to a certain extent modernised the role of civil defence by introducing new orders. However, the Civil Defence Act 1948 is out of date and I believe, in tandem with my right hon. Friend the Member for Upminister, that now is the time to introduce a new Act of Parliament.

My hon. Friend referred to some of the climatic hazards and extremes of weather which have occurred in Britain over a short period. An examination of the climatic extremes during the 11-year period to which he referred, from 1968 to 1978 inclusive, reveals a great many incidents. For instance, between 1968 and 1978, many deaths were caused by gales or floods, some of which my hon. Friend referred to, and there were a number of gales and sea floods. The highest number of people killed in any one incident was 28 in central and eastern England in 1976, when 3,800 buildings were damaged. On 13 January 1978, some 26 people were killed on the east coast of Lincolnshire and in Kent, and there were 22 deaths in 1968 in the west of Scotland and Glasgow.

A projection of these statistics over an 11-year period gives an idea of the pattern of incidents which the country has suffered between 1968 and 1978. The country is not actually prone to attack; rather it is exposed to hazards from the environment and its extremes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster referred to the east coast floods which took place ten or 15 years before the 11-year period I have just been talking about. Many parts of the east coast were levelled and the spring tides came into Lincolnshire and parts of the Fen country. I remember that incident, as I was sent to the east coast to try to retrieve what remained of some property belonging to the company I worked for. I took a gang of men and we tried to find what had been left of four hotels which the company owned. The hotels had entirely disappeared from sight,, they had been razed to the ground and all we could trace in each case were the cellars, which were filled with sand but still contained intact bottles of whisky. However, there was no trace left of the hotels or of many houses in the towns affected in Lincolnshire; there were just sand dunes where buildings had been.

That pattern of floods in the 1950s again occurred without warning and with extreme ferocity. If one examines with a magnifying glass a much smaller pattern of hazard events during the winter of 1977-78 caused by climatic conditions, one finds that between the beginning of 1977 and the middle of 1978 there were a number of blizzards in which many people were killed. There was a severe blizzard on 29 January 1978 in north-east Scotland where four people were killed and on 13 January 1978 there were gales and floods on the Lincolnshire coast which resulted in the deaths of 26 people. Again, there was a pattern all over the country of natural climatic hazards.

Having discussed the possibility of nuclear accident and severe hazards of extremes weather, it may be considered farcical to mention the hazards that can be experienced on Britain's motorways. Nevertheless, if one had been in, or witnessed either on television or at first hand, the effects of a multiple pile-up on some sections of the motorway system which are prone to such occurrences, one would not dismiss such incidents lightly. There have been frequent occasions when the motorway services have been over-stretched.

Our motorway emergency services do and have done a splendid job. However, as more and more sections of motorway are improved or opened, as in the case of the M25 orbital motorway around London, the hazards of major motorway pile-ups involving many vehicles are likely to increase. The effects of yesterday's accidents may be trivial, but due to the extra speed and the larger volume of traffic, the effects of accidents tomorrow may be more severe.

I hope that the Bill will not ignore the effects on the civil population of major motorway pile-ups. There have been many major pile-ups which have had tragic results and some have involved up to 100 vehicles. I cannot foresee those accidents becoming less numerous or of less concern to the nation. If the Bill can recognise, without it being enlarged or lengthened too much, the particular concern of hon. Members with motorways in their constituencies, I am sure that the House would be grateful to the hon. Member for Upminster for introducing the Bill.

If one were to take a magnifying glass and examine the pattern of road behaviour over a two-year period and in particular look at the fog-prone areas, one would find that the number of motorway accidents is considerable. Over a two-year period in those areas, no fewer than 14 different major accidents occurred. Of those accidents, two involved 50 vehicles and both occurred around Christmas time. Another two accidents occurred at the same spot at Crawley, one involving 100 vehicles and the other 208 vehicles. There was another large accident, again on the M1, that involved 48 vehicles, again at Christmas. In the two-year period on the M1, there were five major accidents and over the motorway network as a whole, there was a continual pattern of accidents which caused so much distress, financial loss and bereavement that the House cannot ignore them.

There is another hazard to which the Bill could relate. My hon. Friend might mention it in Committee. There are

many plants and factories all over Britain making lethal substances. The number is growing. The number of vehicles which transport such substances is growing. I am not thinking of vehicles which carry active nuclear material; I am thinking of vehicles carrying toxic and unpleasant chemicals.

One does not need to have a vivid imagination to realise what could happen if a large vehicle carrying an unpleasant and toxic liquid were to have an accident which caused serious damage to the vehicle and resulted in the load catching fire or leaking in the middle of a city. Most such vehicles skirt city centres. We must rely largely on the honour of the driver and the company to do that and not to take a short cut through a city late at night. Drivers of such toxic loads, for whom I have the greatest admiration, do not take such short cuts. Where they can, they go round a city, but late at night there must be a temptation to cut corners and go through city centres.

An accident could occur. Is there any way in which the Bill could cope with the hazards which might arise when dangerous and explosive items are carried by commercial vehicles around or through our city centres?

I shall not go into the detail of the sites of such plants; suffice it to say that no fewer than 28 major plants are listed in England and Wales alone which produce or handle exceptionally toxic and dangerous substances. My hon. Friend should take them into account.

The Bill should also relate to major railway accidents. There has been a pattern of such accidents and emergencies, some involving many deaths. Between 1965 and 1984, there was a chain of train accidents involving five or more passenger deaths. With some of those accidents, the House has said that it was remarkable that more people did not lose their lives.

There was the crash at Moorgate when 42 people died. Many experts thought that it was remarkable, and only due to the fantastic work of the professional emergency services, that the death toll was not much higher. Will my hon. Friend look at the record of train accidents to see whether there is some way in which the Bill can help?

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): My hon. Friend is correct. I agree with what he said about the dangers of transporting toxic waste by road. Does he recognise that a rail accident can cause similar problems? In my constituency, four weeks ago, there was a derailment when a train carrying several tankers of petroleum spirit discharged about 40,000 gallons of petroleum spirit at a village in the middle of my constituency. If it were not for the emergency services, there could well have been a terrible disaster. My hon. Friend is correct to highlight that matter.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. I am glad to hear that he, like me, has profound admiration for our emergency services and the splendid work that they do. They cope, but they could be overwhelmed by the size of an event.

The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that our civil defence network is on its toes and could help out at a large incident if the professional services were overwhelmed. Civil defence could provide a valuable network to fall back on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster referred to the civil defence orders. They are relatively new. The House may be interested to know why it was necessary to introduce them. Under the Civil Defence Act 1948, local authorities were required to exercise the obligations laid upon them in the 11 clauses of that Act. Unfortunately, in 1982 and 1983 many local authorities, for one reason or another, were not discharging their duties. One misguided reason was that some local authorities thought that the Act and the orders related only to wartime measures. The Bill is geared to peacetime emergencies and catastrophes.

New civil defence orders were introduced in 1983, because in 1982 many local authorities had refused to take part in a Government exercise called Hard Rock. The exercise was abandoned. Some local authorities did not fulfil their obligation to make plans to cope with a civil defence emergency. Four sets of regulations introduced in 1983 increased local authorities' civil defence responsibilities and, in some cases, improved civil defence grants. County councils and the GLC had a duty to review plans for the continuation of a number of essential services, in war, to arrange civil defence training, to participate in training and to provide emergency centres for civil defence direction. All local authorities affected by the Civil Defence Act 1948 must comply with any direction given to them by the Government.

Some local authorities were especially unco-operative before 1983 and to a certain extent after 1983. These authorities have not gone along with Government plans to put civil defence on a modern and effective footing. The Government have increased grants from 75 per cent. to 100 per cent. for civil defence communications, equipment, training and exercises, and the payments to staffs and volunteers. Despite that, there has been a reluctance on the part of some local authorities to adopt Government plans.

The Government were careful when changing the grant regulations. The previous requirement on local authority staffs to participate actively in civil defence was dropped. Local authorities are no longer required to make plans for organising the evacuation of the population — that is done by central Government.

Those local authorities which have been reluctant to co-operate with the Government have been so because they did not agree with civil defence against a nuclear attack. They thought—I think wrongly—that there is no such thing as personal civil defence against a nuclear attack. Such local authorities felt, and some still feel, that their total measure of civil defence is to erect a notice at their city limits which states that it is a nuclear-free zone. I hope my hon. Friend's Bill makes progress on to the statute book and that it is made clear that the Bill intends to cope with unexpected catastrophes which may occur in peacetime. If my hon. Friend can put as much emphasis as possible on this feature, the Bill can and should make great progress.

I should like to refer to the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985—on the Committee on which I had the good fortune to sit for a few months. We had long debates on part I of the Act. Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 relate to emergency orders and the contamination of food. Section 1 gave the Minister power to make emergency orders when a chemical or industrial accident had occurred which could pollute foodstuffs and other materials. We had long debates on how section 1 would be activated in the event of an industrial accident when large stocks of food were thought to be contaminated. We also had considerable co-operation and discussion — which is relevant to my hon. Friend's Bill — with the local

[Sir John Farr]

authorities on how their own teams of civil defence workers would help to operate part I of the Act when emergency orders have been made.

I wish my hon. Friend's Bill every success, and I am sure it will reach the statute book at an early date.

11.4 am

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminister (Sir N. Bonsor) not only on doing well in the ballot yet again—many of us will envy him—but also on being so kind as to agree to put forward this measure on civil defence. I am also grateful to him for his kind remarks.

As the House is aware, I have spent much of the past three and a quarter years trying to obtain all-party consensus on this important matter. I hope that we are now approaching that happy position. The fact that my hon. Friend's Bill enjoys support from all parts of the House suggests that we are moving in that direction. I would like to pay tribute to Mr. Tony Hibbert and the Trebah Trust for their enormous work, largely at their own expense, in promoting civil defence. The trust has received no commercial or any other backing and is not even a registered charity. Those who have contributed in this area have done a great service to the whole community. We do not appreciate how many people provide support and assistance for many different causes without thought to themselves but at cost to themselves. Such people spend large amounts of their own money attempting to alert us to what we are inclined to take for granted.

It is helpful to mention the all-party support that was achieved a year ago in another place. If one reads the extremely good debate that took place there on 6 February 1985 one notices the valuable speeches in support of civil defence made by Lord Renton, Lord Graham and Lord Mayhew. I consider civil defence as civil protection, because that is precisely what it is.

The speeches of hon. Members this morning have been thoughtful and helpful. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) has adopted, right from the start, a sensible approach to civil protection. I should not be too surprised at that as he is a fellow chartered surveyor. I fully support his request for 100 per cent. funding from the Home Office. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, will not be surprised by my support for this form of funding, since I have long supported it. Other national services such as the Territorial Army receives 100 per cent. funding. We must consider such funding not only for the additional duties involved in civil protection but across the whole spectrum of services. Civil protection merits 100 per cent. support and there is no reason why it cannot be arranged through the rate support grant without additional cost to the Exchequer. The public has a right to this protection.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight also mentioned that he had visited, like my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), Hiroshima and Nagasaki immediately after 1945. That must have been a terrible experience for both hon. Members. Such experience helps the House to appreciate these situations much more clearly. Both hon. Members have made valuable contributions to the debate this morning.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) has published a book on civil defence and it formed part of my introduction to the subject. We therefore respect his contributions to the debate, and on previous occasions, because of his depth of knowledge.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) rightly highlighted other aspects of civil defence relating to the problems on our motorways, and roads through our towns and villages. The type of materials now being transported raises considerable cause for concern. Not long ago there was a terrible accident in France involving a petrol tanker and a holiday camp site. Although we tend to close our eyes to the possibility of such tragedies, they occur, and in those cases the emergency services come into their own.

We are fortunate in the extremely professional way in which our fire and ambulance services operate and the dedicated work of the men and women who work in them. We tend to rely on them. An enormous emergency, such as there would be if an oil refinery were affected, has a rippling effect. When I visited an oil refinery on the south coast some years ago I was told that such an emergency would affect the fire services up to and including Luton as they would provide back-up for the various fire services which would move in to deal with the emergency on the south coast. That shows that we call on a wide network to deal with that type of emergency, and in those circumstances we must look towards volunteers who are able and willing to provide the extra help that is so important.

Bhopal has already been mentioned, where 2,000 people died and 100,000 were taken ill. That was terrible. Even in the best of circles, and despite the most sophisticated technology, there was a terrible accident in the United States. That shows that one cannot be too careful, and that things go wrong unexpectedly. We must always allow for that. The consequences of such an emergency can be devastating.

What could or might have happened at Sellafield has also been mentioned today, and the position on Three Mile Island some years ago is particularly relevant to that. I would not wish to turn the clock back and do away with some of the few advantages of nuclear energy in providing atomic power, but we must be prepared to deal with any emergency that may arise from it.

A terrible accident took place at Mississauga, where 218,000 people had to be evacuated at short notice, as my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster mentioned in his comprehensive speech. He mentioned that the after-effects of the Flixborough disaster continued for three months. Such matters are brought to our notice, and the general public expect politicians to consider them because that is our job, and to make adequate provision for their safety and protection. That is exactly what the Bill seeks to achieve.

In 1983, the Humber estuary was contaminated by oil pollution. It took 15 days to deal with the oil spillage, during which the emergency communication network was used to co-ordinate activity from the county emergency centre in Hull. Many civil defence volunteers were involved in monitoring beaches, and volunteers from Raynet, a voluntary amateur radio group, provided communications at beach level. The group provided extremely valuable assistance on that occasion. That shows what use can and should be made of civil emergency volunteers.

In December 1985 Leeds suffered from the loss of its water supply. There was a fracture of a major water main

which was carrying water from a reservoir near Leeds to a local treatment plant and 250,000 consumers were deprived of water. The Army provided water tankers to carry water to supply points around the affected parts of the city. The west Yorkshire county planning officer was alerted and arranged for Raynet volunteers to accompany each tanker to enable close central control of the distribution of water. The operation continued for more than three days and involved 53 Raynet volunteers. That was yet another case when the civil protection system was used to the advantage of the community at large.

Those various examples show clearly how the House acknowledges the existence of a demand for the Bill. I, together with many others, wish it a speedy passage to the statute book, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing the matter to the notice of the House.

11.15 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on introducing a Bill which is practical in its purpose and visionary in its foresight. I fear that over the years civil defence has had a somewhat tarnished image. It is a lacklustre subject in the eyes of many people, and many of the authorities responsible have approached it in a less than professional way.

The Bill is a milestone of a change in that image. The title, Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill, shows that civil defence is not a response to a wartime threat so much as an all-hazards approach to problems and disasters which arise and affect the whole civil population. The Bill goes a long way towards burnishing the past lacklustre image of civil defence.

It is a worthy, noble and visionary cause, because civil protection is a humanitarian response to disasters and problems affecting the civil population. It exists to save life and limb, to reduce suffering, and to give help and succour in major disasters, not merely those which arise through warfare. The Bill helps to re-establish public confidence, support and credibility in civil defence in peacetime.

It is extraordinary that some local authorities and public figures—largely on the Left—have derided civil defence in the past. Neutral countries, such as Switzerland and Sweden, take it seriously. The shelters required by law, and the provision which individual families must make in their homes, suggest a responsible approach by the authorities and a responsible response from the citizens. The civil population recognises its responsibility, directed by the Government who protect its freedom and neutrality and provide proper defence.

In approaching the subject in a new way, we must recognise that while the primary responsibility for civil protection is placed on local authorities, it is not solely their responsibility. Public authorities, Government Departments, emergency services, and, indeed, industry, are also responsible. All those elements must co-ordinate their response to the problems, threats and hazards which surround us.

We learn from answers to parliamentary questions that the Ministry of Defence has recognised the problems that could arise from the nuclear electronic-magnetic pulse—NEMP. However, there is little recognition in the public service at large, for example in the Health Service and industry, of what the disastrous effects of NEMP could be.

We have seen from the approach of many local authorities and individuals that civil defence is seen to be in conflict with the disarmament movement, or, to put it more precisely, the disarmament movement has found a target in civil defence in the past. We must try to disabuse people who think that there is a natural conflict. Civil defence is complementary to disarmament just as much as it is for those who believe in armament to protect ourselves against nuclear attack.

Therefore, we need an all-party all-element approach—a co-ordinated approach to the problem. Those local authorities who display nuclear-free zone signs are being contemptuous, and that is no way to respond to the real hazards which exist. That is simply a way of showing utter and complete contempt for the real needs of those that the authorities are there to serve. I hope that the Bill will do a great deal towards re-establishing in the public mind the need to follow through those thoughts to their logical end, to combat those who seek to ridicule any form of civil defence or protection.

Perhaps one of the greatest schemes which has been initiated in recent years for the safety of London is the Thames barrier, yet those authorities in London which support the Thames barrier find that they cannot bring themselves to give any support for the civilian population in their area in other forms of all-hazards protection.

The Bill goes a great way towards changing attitudes. It will establish a new approach which should be recognised by all parties and all authorities, of whatever political persuasion. I am delighted to be one of the Bill's sponsors. I wish it a speedy course through the House and a speedy arrival upon the statute book. I commend it to the House.

11.21 am

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I join in congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on bringing forward the Bill, especially because it permits rather than instructs local authorities. There can be a tendency, especially in private Members' Bills, to load something else on to local authorities as a statutory duty. That does not help relations between Parliament and local government, or relations between local Members of Parliament and local government.

The Bill, and the movement towards civil protection, will only work with public support. People must believe that it is necessary and want to do it and not have to be instructed. That is the case that we must make.

There is a great difference between a single peacetime disaster on which all resources can be concentrated for the necessary time, with aid summoned in from neighbouring counties and towns, and a general attack in war, when, at the very least, the scope for mutual support would be much reduced. One must recognise that difference.

Some years ago, when I was leader of the London borough of Kingston-upon-Thames, civil defence and civil protection became an issue again. We looked, and as leader I looked, at what was on the books. The answer was very little. We had to start practically from scratch. We did not get much help from the Home Office.

The starting point was civil defence, and the worst scenario is nuclear war. Like everybody else in politics, I had read bits and pieces, but it was much more difficult to nail down the dangers that would have to be faced if certain weapons were detonated at various distances from

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the town. We could get no information whatever out of the Government. Luckily, London has a large United States embassy and library and the staff there were tremendously helpful. A London borough had to get from the American embassy information on which to base its civil defence plans. If that seems slightly absurd now, it seemed slightly absurd then. I do not know whether the information is not available on grounds of secrecy but it is difficult to make plans without knowing what must be dealt with.

We held various exercises in civil defence and civil protection. It might be a comment on the relationship between senior officers in local government and elected members that the main aim of the controller seemed to be to dispatch elected members, preferably into a heavily irradiated zone, to get them out of the exercise at a fairly early stage, making his life easier.

In wartime, the controller has draconian powers. For civil protection the situation is different. Training is important. Unless people have been in the situation, they do not know the mental problems that might arise. There is the shock and mental strain of seeing familiar surroundings devastated, and it is only training and discipline that can overcome that. Without that, people will be shocked into submission.

One of the exercises that we carried out was to discover the location of heavy equipment and emergency supplies in the borough that might be needed at short notice. Telephone networks might be out of commission for various reasons and people would need to know where to go to get hold of tents, and heavy civil equipment such as bulldozers, quickly. We talked to various companies which had such equipment so that we were ready to go. The same thing was true for food stocks.

One of the scenarios that, as a London borough, we had to think of was the flooding of London because the barrier had not been erected. I think that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was also involved in local government in London at that time. Kingston-upon-Thames might not have been heavily flooded, but the water and sewerage systems would have been out of commission. We would have had to act as a reception point for people comimg from the flooded parts of London. Those people had to be put into schools and under canvas. Chemicals would be needed to produce sufficient clean water. We needed to know where to get sandbags from in an emergency and we needed to know where to get food stocks to feed the people.

If London had ever flooded, it would have been a nightmare. It was estimated that within 24 hours we could have had as many casualties as the whole of the United Kingdom in the six years of the second world war. That was the scale of the disaster. Thank heavens the barrier is now there, because I am not convinced that if there had been a disaster London would have coped.

Another disaster that might have to be dealt with would be that of a jumbo jet coming down, perhaps on a high street on a Saturday afternoon. We know that in wartime the controller takes charge locally. In peacetime it is not at all clear what would happen. We do not know who would be in charge in any given situation. There is usually co-operation, but we cannot depend on that.

During the war, one of the most bitter arguments took place in Coventry between the civil authorities, in the shape of the mayor and council, and the army. When Coventry was devastated, the army wanted to impose martial law immediately. One can say that the army usually wants to impose martial law to deal with such a situation. It led to bitter relations there and that was often true elsewhere. After 40 years, there tends to be a romantic haze and people gloss over some of the real difficulties that showed up in such emergencies. Those would be there, be they civil or wartime emergencies. If no forward planning or structure is laid down before the problems are reached, it is almost impossible to cope with them in the middle of an emergency because it is then too late.

There is another nightmare, touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir John Farr), which came to light only by accident. Luckily, one of the members of the council understood what all the signs on the back of heavy lorries meant when they are carrying dangerous substances. He saw two lorries that had collided on the edge of the town. They had only grazed each other. However, being a chemist, he rapidly worked out what would have happened if the chemicals had mixed: we would have had a massive poisonous gas problem. The polite title nowadays is "noxious fumes", but ultimately it comes down to poison gas. Imagine such a problem on a heavy shopping day—and it could happen. We have to think such problems through. The difficulty is that we do not like to think of our familiar surroundings devastated. However, if we do not prepare beforehand, when the problem hits it is too late and we face total confusion. We have to work through the worst scenario from beginning to end, however unpleasant some of the choices might be, and that comes down to training and being prepared.

Other hon. Members have pointed out that other countries are much better prepared than we are. Switzerland, Sweden and the Soviet Union can all be cited. They have organisations, not only for civil defence in wartime but which can also double up for peacetime emergencies and they prove themselves to be more than worth while. I believe that we should copy that example. If we do not, sooner or later there will be an incident in this country and the system will not be able to cope because we have not done the contingency planning. If that happens, the people and the media will ask why we were not prepared. It will be the politicians who will have to answer that question, and there will be no excuses. That means that we have to argue that resources which people would rather see spent on immediate things, have to be paid out on an insurance premium that we hope we will never have to use. However, if we do have to use it, we will need it desperately.

11.32 am

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I would like to add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on his customary and regular good fortune in the ballot. This is a worthwhile piece of legislation, which I think will commend itself to both sides of the House.

I have particular reasons for wanting to see the Bill on the statute book. Some of my hon. Friends have already referred to disasters which have occurred in the past where legislation of this kind, had it been on the statute book, would have assisted in dealing with the emergency. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne), referred to Flixborough. Before the boundaries were changed for the parliamentary constituencies before the

last general election, I had the privilege of representing the village of Flixborough. Although the disaster at Flixborough occurred in 1975, some four years before I came to the House, the issue of safety was very much in the minds of all the electors in the old parliamentary constituency of Brigg and Scunthorpe. During the 1979 election campaign, many people asked me what sort of provision I would commend to the House if I were elected. I undertook that if I were ever lucky in a private Members' ballot I would contemplate the sort of legislation which my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster has brought before us today.

The disaster at Flixborough had a devastating effect on my old constituency. That effect still lingers in the fears of people to this day. One has only to go to that village and look at the old houses and brick buildings which were built in the early part of this century. Every roof of those houses is brand new. Although they have been on now for 10 years, one can see the sharpness of the tiles on the roof. One has only to look around the village to realise that all the roofs of the houses were blown off. Not only was there loss of life at the plant, but on that fateful Saturday afternoon in June 1975 but, there was devastation and a complete community was wrecked by fear. I know that Mr. John Ellis, who was the Member for that constituency at the time, would be the first, and I would be the second, to pay tribute to the emergency services which did a tremendous job when the disaster overtook Flixborough and the area around Scunthorpe. If the Bill had been on the statute book then, I think that it might have been possible to have an even speedier reaction to that disaster.

The disaster will for ever be in the mind of everybody in south Humberside. It made a terrible impression on the local community, as far as the town of Scunthorpe some six or seven miles away. Windows were blown out of many of the shops in Scunthorpe and one needed to have some provision to deal with the consequences of the disaster even though those consequences were felt several miles away. We tend to forget that, when a disaster occurs, it is not only at the site of the disaster that we need to ensure that arrangements are in hand, but we must see that there are facilities to deal with whatever problems one might not know about some miles away.

People looking at that thick, black mushroom cloud over Flixborough thought that that was the only place where the problem was. They did not know that houses in surrounding villages had had their roofs blown off, or that people in Scunthorpe were suffering from cuts as a result of broken glass. I think that that is where a Bill of this kind, if enacted, can have a tremendous impact on minimising some of the worst aspects of such disasters.

Sadly, my constituency is situated in a part of the country where much hazardous industrial activity is carried out. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South also mentioned the disaster in 1983 when the oil tanker Sivand discharged a complete cargo of crude oil into the river Humber and into the Humber estuary around my constituency and the oil washed on to the beach at Cleethorpes. Cleethorpes is the prize town in my constituency. It is a tourist town visited by many people, from Scunthorpe, Doncaster, and Sheffield. If that beach is ever damaged in any way, it will make tourism redundant in Cleethorpes. People from Scunthorpe and the surrounding area take a long time to come back to the beach at Cleethorpes, even when it has been cleaned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South rightly drew attention to the excellent co-ordination within county hall on the north bank of the Humber when the disaster was being dealt with. Its results extended beyond the immediate vicinity of Immingham and Cleethorpes, for oil entered the mouth of the Humber, which is tidal as far as the rivers Ouse and Trent. If any oil enters the Humber at the estuary on the tide, it will be washed up as far as the junction of the three great rivers, the Ouse, the Trent and the Humber. Unfortunately, oil damaged wildlife all along the Humber. If the Bill had been on the statute book when the disaster occurred in 1983, the emergency services would have been helped tremendously in carrying out their work.

I am making no complaint about the work of the emergency services, either at Flixborough or when the Sivand disaster occurred, but I am sure that they would be the first to accept any additional provision that might be available from local authorities as part of their civil defence and civil protection arrangements. Local authorities have facilities and statutory duties are set out in the Civil Defence Act 1948 that require local authorities to be prepared in the event of war. However, given the hazardous industries that are located in Britain, and especially in my constituency, it is becoming increasingly likely that we shall have to contend with home-produced disasters rather than a nuclear war. I suspect that more of my constituents will lose their lives through the disasters and accidents that are liable to occur in the sort of industries that are located in my constituency than through war.

I intervened in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, (Sir J. Farr) when he was talking about the transportation of hazardous commodities. I drew his attention to the derailment at Barnetby in my constituency four or five weeks ago. Barnetby is a major railway junction in Humberside and it is the station that I use when I make my journeys to the House. Accordingly, I know the station very well. Three major railway lines meet at Barnetby and as the lines are used for a considerable amount of freight activity, there is potential for disaster.

The entire village of Barnetby had to be evacuated when a large train of oil tankers was derailed at 6·30 am. We do not yet know the reason for the derailment. Two of the tankers discharged 40,000 gallons of petroleum spirit. The spirit was being carried from one of the two oil refineries along the bank of the Humber in my constituency. I hope that the House is getting the flavour of the huge amount of hazardous industry which is going on in the area and will understand why those in it will look with pleasure and gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster if his Bill has a safe passage through both House of Parliament.

As I have said, 40,000 gallons of petroleum spirit were discharged at Barnetby. If there had been a spark from a match at that moment, there would have been a most ghastly disaster. Once again, the emergency services carried out a marvellous job. There was a task for the local authority to perform as someone had to be responsible for the orderly evacuation of the village. Some people were unable to return to their homes for several days. A week passed from the moment of the derailment before the fire brigade was able to take away the last tender. A danger confronted the village for a long period. The petrol had seeped into the ground and difficulty was experienced in

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removing it. Much time and energy was expended in so doing. Much of the spirit was recovered but much was left, and accordingly there was great concern.

Glanford borough council did a marvellous job, along with all the other authorities, but I am sure that it would be the first to say that if it had had the legislative protection that the Bill would provide it would have been able to evacuate Barnetby even more quickly.

Yet another problem will confront my constituents if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has his way. I should add that he will not. I am led to believe that on Tuesday next week, after much dilly-dallying my right hon. Friend will announce the four sites that NIREX, the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Executive, has sent to the Department of the Environment, which it has been sitting on since 8 January. I am prepared to bet my shirt on one of the sites being the South Killingholme area in my constituency. We shall be confronted with the prospect of having a nuclear waste dump in the area.

I have news for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I have told my constituents that there will be no nuclear waste disposed of anywhere in my constituency so long as I am their Member of Parliament. My right hon. Friend will have to work out what I mean by that. I have declared my commitment and I intend to carry it out. If in a few years' time, after a public inquiry, a Secretary of State should dare to sign an order allowing a nuclear waste dump to be constructed in my constituency, certain consequences will follow. I advise the House and my constituency to watch this space.

If nuclear waste were to be disposed of in any constituency, the waste would have to be transported to it. It would have to be taken to the dump from where it was being stored. As I have said, I shall make it my business to ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State does not get his way and does not sign an order allowing a dump to be constructed in my constituency.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough said that already enough toxic or hazardous materials are transported throughout the country on motorways. He drew our attention to motorway accidents. Can we begin to imagine what might happen if on the way to my constituency the train that is derailed is not carrying petroleum spirit but nuclear waste? Can one begin to imagine the horror—that I shall ensure will not occur—in south Humberside? What would have happened if that railway train travelling from the oil refinery to the midlands with petroleum spirit had been carrying nuclear waste for a nuclear power station?

There is no railway line into South Killingholme, so lorries would have to used for the final part of the journey. If railways are the better way of transporting such material, one can imagine that mid-week morning a few weeks ago when the train was derailed. If that train had contained nuclear waste bound for my constituency one can imagine the need for an immediate emergency service and the need for such a Bill.

I sincerely hope and pray that the constituencies threatened and blighted by the Secretary of State's announcement, which we await with horror and anxiety, will not have to rely on the Bill alone, because that would not be enough.

I am describing events which have happened and which, if the Secretary of State for the Environment has his way, might again happen in my constituency. That is why the Bill's Second Reading today is so timely. It will concentrate the minds of many people in my constituency who live in constant fear because of the disaster at Flixborough and in connection with the Sivand.

All my constituents will be interested in the Bill's progress. They will be interested to hear what the Minister of State says about the transportation of nuclear waste and how he thinks that the Bill will affect the scenario that I have painted.

The Bill is important. My constituents know what disaster means. They live in the shadow of fear. The two oil refineries in my constituency make a magnificent contribution to the economy. There is no need for the Secretary of State for the Environment or the Secretary of State for Energy to tell me about the need for energy or about the need for some constituencies to be responsible for manufacturing energy. My constituency produces a vast amount of the nation's energy. We are responsible for oil refining. My constituency on the Humber estuary and on the edge of the North sea is that part of the country where oil and gas come in.

We are already playing our part in creating the nation's energy. We are not prepared to have nuclear waste dumped on our doorstep. We are making our contribution to the nation's energy reserves and the people living in the shadow of the Conoco and Lindsey oil refineries accept the risks. They accept that a price has to be paid in an element of risk. They will be reassured by the Bill.

I am confident that the Health and Safety Executive, the Department of Employment and all those responsible for industries using hazardous materials make safety their highest priority. However, there must be eternal vigilance. We must be prepared in case something goes wrong. I hope that the Bill's provisions will be used only rarely.

No one wants disasters, but as we move into the new age of ever more complicated and dangerous substances in the chemical industry, we must be prepared. We must ensure that we consider the appropriate way to be prepared and responsible, should that need arise.

The buck must always stop with the politicians. We are ultimately responsible for the climate of safety and opinion in the country. The House has obligations towards hazardous industries.

I do not suggest that we close all the hazardous chemical industries or oil refineries. On many occasions I have championed the cause of those industries. I am delighted at the new investment in the Conoco oil refinery, as it constructs a catalytic cracker. A tremendous amount of employment is being generated as a result of that investment, but that catalytic cracker has safety implications. The Health and Safety Executive will want to ensure that the new investment is A1 in terms of safety and we, when considering legislation, must ensure that we understand the problems and the disasters with which local authorities might have to deal.

I am not at all against the success and the flourishing development of the chemical industry or the petroleum industry, but with so many industries concentrated on the Humber bay of south Humberside, all along the edge of the northern boundary of my constituency, it is imperative that we recognise that people live in daily fear. A couple of weeks ago, I was at a public meeting in the village of East Halton, to do with the nuclear waste industry. People

there can look across from their houses to the oil refinery, and although that refinery has a tremendous safety record, I can understand people's fears.

I have highlighted why this Bill will be welcomed in my constituency, and I again congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster.

12.1 pm

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): For the last two hours I have felt a little like the Lone Ranger and I am delighted to see that the US Cavalry has arrived to support me. I congratulate the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on his success for the second time in the ballot for private Members' Bills. I wish him every success in continuing to prosecute the cause for which he introduced his first private Members' Bill.

The Bill he has before the House today and which he introduced so comprehensively and clearly, seeks to address the problem of the possibility of using civil defence or, as the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) would have us call it, civil protection facilities, for the purposes of combating peacetime emergencies. It will not come as any surprise to the House to hear that those of us on the Opposition Benches approach the Bill from a somewhat different perspective to that of many hon. Members who have spoken from the Government Benches.

Many of us, myself included, have the severest doubts about the value of civil defence or civil protection preparation for a nuclear war. We regard as a grotesque charade the possibility of providing any conceivable sort of remedy or protection for the citizenry in the event of a nuclear attack. That is the direction from which we approach the Bill. Although that perspective differs from the perspective of hon. Members on the Government side, we come to somewhat similar conclusions about the use to which civil defence facilities can be put in peacetime.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) spoke movingly about the sight of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the devastation of 1945. The hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) also spoke about that spectacle. I have some doubts about his conclusion that civil defence might mitigate such a disaster, because I do not believe it can. That is the position of the Labour party on the use and usefulness of civil defence precautions in the event of nuclear attack.

In a sense it is worse to try to persuade our people that in the event of nuclear attack some sort of civil protection or civil defence is possible, because that tends to make the concept of nuclear war and fighting and surviving it more thinkable. The attitudes that breed that view are at times dangerous. That is the position from which we approach the Bill.

Many local authorities have suffered in this debate from side-swipes from Government Members, including the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) and the hon. Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks), over their decision to become nuclear-free zones. I will not go into detail about the admirable reasons for any of those decisions. Those local authorities share our scepticism about the potential value, or lack of value, of civil defence preparations in the event of nuclear attack.

Having put that clearly on the record as the perspective from which we approach this Bill, I should say that does not mean we ought not to look seriously and thoroughly at the way in which we presently respond to peacetime emergencies, and at the relative lack of preparation that we have brought to them.

We must welcome anything that tries to concentrate resources on the peacetime use of civil defence rather than on preparation for hypothetical wartime use. I think it was the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) who spoke about a humanitarian response to disaster. All of us in the House ought to be addressing ourselves to that. The Opposition welcomes the principle of the Bill. We welcome the use of civil protection and the defence powers for peacetime rather than for wartime preparation. We welcome anything that attempts to address emergencies when they occur in peacetime.

We have some questions to pose and some qualifications to make about parts of the Bill. Many citizens may well be surprised to learn that the resources available to local authorities for civil defence purposes cannot in strict legal terms be used to address peacetime emergencies. I understand that the Home Office tends to look somewhat benignly at local authorities that use some of their personnel and staff for planning for peacetime emergencies rather than for wartime emergencies. Strictly speaking, those authorities are breaking the law and as a legal rationalisation measure, if nothing else, this Bill is welcome.

It is interesting to note, as has been mentioned in this debate, that the measure was forecast in the Conservative party's election manifesto. I suspect that the hon. Member for Upminster has had considerable Home Office co-operation and support in drafting the Bill. For that reason we must look at it carefully as not simply the creation of the industry and ingenuity of the hon. Member, but also of the Home Office and probably Government Ministers as well. In that context, the Opposition will look at it carefully. The first question we must ask is what resources are we talking about and is there any plan on the part of the Government, if this Bill becomes law, to devote increased resources for the purposes the Bill seeks to address. There is no commitment to additional resources and no specific commitment in the Bill to provide such resources. Will local authorities yet again be asked to do more with less, or will the Government ensure that the proper resources, in the form of the civil defence grant, are made available to local authorities?

It is worth considering briefly the resources that are available to local authorities to cope with disasters and emergencies. All local authorities have powers under section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972, and its Scottish equivalent of 1973, to incur expenditure and make grants or loans to avert or ameliorate the effects of an emergency or disaster in their areas. However, the fire and civil defence authorities that will replace the metropolitan county councils and the GLC on 1 April are not entitled to any such funding or powers under section 138. An attempt was made to rectify that anomaly in the Local Government Act 1985, but it failed on the general policy ground advanced by the Government that the district councils and London boroughs had the power and that it was not needed by the strategic London authorities. It might be worth considering during the passage of this Bill whether the fire and civil defence authorities set up after abolition should be awarded that section 138 power to bring them into line with all other local authorities faced with new responsibilities and powers.

[Mr. Chris Smith]

In addition to section 138 money, there are two sources of funding, the first of which are the CIMAH, or Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards Regulations. They allow for the charging of manufacturers where a public authority must step in to cope with disasters that occur as a result of the manufacturers' actions. The second source of funding is the civil defence grant, which needs prior ministerial approval, which can be waived. It is discretionary.

Those resources are put to different uses by the districts, boroughs, shire counties and Scottish regions. Few districts and boroughs have identifiable civil defence resources that could be used under clause 2(1), apart from their civil defence emergency centres and communication equipment. Those emergency centres, which are colloquially called bunkers are unlikely to be of practical value in a peacetime emergency or disaster, and their communications networks are generally linked to the county bunkers rather than the outside world. The shire counties and Scottish regions also have few physical civil defence resources that could be utilised under the terms of the Bill, but they have civil defence staff and a network of volunteers that could be put to some use. However, the civil defence staff are primarily there for planning purposes, so their main use would be under clause 2(2).

The value of volunteers would depend entirely on the quality of training and exercising that they receive and their availability in the circumstances of the emergency or disaster. In considering the resources that will be made available to the civil defence authorities if the Bill is passed, we must ask whether new resources will be made available and what new facilities or services will be provided that are not already provided by ad hoc arrangements between authorities. Will the Bill simply be a consolidating and legalising measure? We must also ask whether section 138 powers will be extended.

The wording of clause 2(2) links far too closely the civil defence plans for wartime and the peacetime plans that are made. That point was raised with the Home Office during a meeting with the Association of Metropolitan Authorities on 5 February. The AMA informed me that the Minister made it clear that, in the Home Office view:

"The civil defence resources made available for peacetime emergency use by the Bill could only be used for dual purposes: civil defence grant would be available for civil defence measures which could serve both purposes but not for projects solely for peacetime use."

That worries me. Linking so closely the resources that are available for peacetime and for wartime use, and saying that they cannot be divorced and that local authorities cannot consider peacetime planning in isolation ignores the crucial differences between different types of emergency.

The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) spoke movingly of the way in which the Flixborough disaster affected his constituency. Other hon. Members spoke of disasters that had occurred or were likely to occur in their constituencies. The hon. Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) spoke of the possibility that water and sewerage protection in London might have gone out of operation had not the Thames flood barrier been constructed — one of the many achievements of the GLC. Recently, I spoke to a microbiologist from Surrey university, who went to Mexico City in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake there to advise the Mexican authorities on their water supplies. He said that when he arrived about six or seven days after the first earthquake, the city authorities had already got into full working order a clean water supply for almost the entire city. He added ruefully that that would not have been possible at that speed had a similar disaster occurred in Britain. That should give us some pause for thought when we consider our preparedness for disasters.

Let us consider two potential disasters. The first is a limited wartime nuclear attack, although it seems obscene to use the word limited in that context. If a nuclear attack was made on Britain, the Government's entire civil defence strategy would be based on the principle of encouraging the population to stay put. The obvious reason for that is that a mass exodus would immediately cause utter chaos. That staying put policy would differ dramatically from the response of the same authorities if there were an accident in peacetime.

If a train carrying nuclear waste were to be involved in an accident in a tunnel with a train carrying a highly inflammable petroleum product and there were to be a derailment of the train carrying the highly inflammable petroleum—it is a chance in a million, but it is possible that such an accident could occur — the danger of nuclear contamination would be very considerable. Evidence to that effect was given only two or three months ago to the Select Committee on the Environment. The immediate response of the authorities to such an accident would have to be to evacuate the population living for miles around the area. The response to the two events would be completely different. In the one event the authorities would endeavour to ensure that the population stayed put. In the other event, the authorities would attempt to enforce the evacuation of the population from the area. It is an extreme example, but I use it to make the point that one has to plan for different types of emergency in different kinds of ways. Clause 2(2) links in a very sweeping fashion plans for peacetime with plans for wartime. That is not the right way to go about it.

During the Committee stage, which I trust will be swift and enable the Bill to come back to the House in good time, I hope that a change will be made that will enable local civil defence authorities to use personnel and resources to make plans, but they ought not to be required to make the same plans as those that are made for use in wartime.

I reiterate my congratulations to the hon. Member for Upminster on introducing the Bill, to which I have pleasure, on behalf of the Opposition, in giving a cautious welcome. We hope that improvements will be made to it in Committee along the lines that I have suggested. Planning for peace is so much better than planning for war. I wish that the Prime Minister would accept that message a little more often.

12.22 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): In recent weeks it has become something of a habit for me to follow the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) in debate. I suspect that he has spoken on every amendment during the many sessions on the Public Order Bill, and I have responded to every amendment. That is therefore no novelty for me. However, I welcome the novelty that this Bill—piloted so very well to its Second Reading by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor)—has provided a

platform for an exchange of views on these issues with the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury in which our objectives coincide. I shall deal with a few of the important points that he raised before I turn to the Bill.

The hon. Gentleman was right to ask about resources. He suggested that this is a codification measure. It is not a measure that will release new resources. The resources that are available from the Home Office for civil defence purposes amount to about £80 million. The grants that are available to local authorities form a significant proportion of that sum—between £11 million and £13 million. The hon. Gentleman will also know that that sum has not been fully spent in recent years because certain local authorities have not made provision for a planned and effective use of civil defence resources.

Furthermore, the thrust of civil defence expenditure is related to the regulations that were published in 1983 and formally issued last year. The assessment of plans made under the regulations will, I hope, lead to a review of expenditure and also to a review of the commitment by local authorities in seeking to implement plans which meet the criteria that are laid down in the regulations.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the power that is contained in section 138. He knows that the powers of essentially multi-purpose authorities are very different from those that can be exercised by single purpose authorities. They are the main successor bodies. There is duality in the metropolitan areas where we are talking about fire and civil defence authorities. They are very different forms of local government structure from the elected local government structure to which he referred and which exercise section 138 powers. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point, that if there are to be effective plans for civil defence by the local fire and civil defence authorities through the implementation of the 1983 regulations we shall have to ensure that resources are available that will enable them effectively to be made.

The object of the Bill is to allow the resources that have been built up within local authorities over the years—resources that are based exclusively upon their civil defence requirements—to be used in addition, where appropriate, for peacetime purposes. It is not a contradiction, as the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury suggested, that this should be so. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster said that what would be available for both is an essential network of communication, trained personnel, volunteer systems and other common factors which in all emergencies, whatever those emergencies may be, would have a common purpose. That should allow the House to welcome the Bill, as has been done by all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster must indeed be congratulated. As has already been pointed out, he will have the enviable reputation of having had allocated to him more than one Bill in the history books of Parliament. He opened the debate with great care and showed great knowledge of the subject. He has a long association with the civil defence movement. He has introduced an important measure which will make it easier for the civil defence movement to find an acceptable role alongside the civil emergency planning role. It will be an all-hazards policy. That is very important.

We believe it to be a vital contribution. It will reassure the general public and it will enhance the use that emergency planning officers can make of the resources that are available to them. We must not forget that, although the Civil Defence Act 1948 did not specify the role of county emergency planning officers, it was very much the catalyst around which this concept has been developed in recent years.

My colleagues referred in their varying and extremely cogent ways to civil emergencies. They must reflect on the fact that the county emergency planning system that has been set up was based largely on the catalytic consequences of the 1948 Act. The county emergency planning officers are effective, well organised and professional. A number of my colleagues drew attention to specific incidents in which the emergency planning officers, acting on behalf of the local authority, had contributed in a major way to the safety of the population.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who has now had to attend another function, rightly paid tribute to the professionalism of the county emergency planning officers. He asked whether the Government intended to review the level of grant which, in most cases, for civil defence purposes, is 75 per cent. of costs. We are reviewing the level of grant. I recognise that, in seeking to improve the capacity of the planning system to take on these additional responsibilities and in seeking, as we must, to improve public awareness of the importance of civil defence, it is right that we should review again the percentage grant obtainable from my Department.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) rightly emphasised the importance of volunteers. Within the civil defence movement a substantial number of persons have given their voluntary time, the most obvious example being the members of the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation. That uniquely effective organisation deals with planning and the potential hazard not only of nuclear attack but of conventional atack and similar disasters. This substantial body comprises over 10,000 highly trained people who provide a communications network.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harrogate (Mr. Banks) was concerned about training and training levels. One advantage of the present grant system is that it encourages recovery of training costs by local authorities. My hon. Friend was right to stress the importance of training.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr), in a weighty contribution, referred particularly to nuclear safety. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), in his evocative contribution on his constituency's problems, made that point also. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough, who referred to Sellafield, that important plans are available designed to deal with these problems in the nuclear industry.

I appreciate the concern that has been expressed about our ability to respond to a major leak of radioactive material. That would have serious consequences. Emergency arrangements and contingency plans have been prepared. There is close liaison between the county emergency planning team in Cumbria and the nuclear industry about the Sellafield site and the British Nuclear Fuels plc installation at Chapel Cross. The emergency planning officer is closely involved in preparing off-site plans for both installations and in monitoring. Regular exercises are held to implement those plans.

The emergency planning officer, representatives of the nuclear industry and the other interested bodies, including the local authority liaison committee, help to ensure that emergency planning is a high profile subject which is dealt

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

with by the sub-committee concerned. It draws on all the experience available on emergency plans to cope with an emergency on the site.

I should like to reassure the House that the matter has been well seized and that there is a structure for co-ordinated planned response if any difficulty or problem requires emergency treatment. I trust that the House will recognise that this is an important subject.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Thorne) referred to the question of reviewing the level of funding, increasing it from 75 per cent. to 100 per cent. I fully understand that point. He reminded the House of the recent uses of the emergency planning procedures, including the use of the Raynet system on Humberside during the oil pollution incident and the recent failure of the water main in Leeds. A number of my constituents had to go without piped water for three days. The emergency planning officer and his team were able to provide an important addition to the resources made available to deal with that problem. That is an effective use of the communications network which has been established for civil defence purposes. The idea that lies behind the Bill is that local authorities should now be clear that, if the Bill reaches the statute book, they are entitled in law as well as in fact to use their resources, which have been developed primarily for civil defence purposes, for peacetime purposes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) referred to the humanitarian approach and he is right to say that that lies behind the Government's attitude to civil defence. Although I know that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) would not accept this, we regard the humanitarian approach as fundamental to defence policy. The Government seek to protect the population from hazard from any direction. That is certainly the case for civil defence as it is for military preparations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) referred to the reduction in the threat of nuclear conflict. The Government have pursued consistent and effective defence policies, against substantial opposition, and we now see the possibilities of nuclear war receding. That is all to the good.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East raised another point about the co-ordination of the response to emergencies. We are studying for a period in the north-west the co-ordination of all the emergency civil defence and allied authorities to see how well Government and local government can respond to a real threat of emergency. We should learn a lot in that way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes expressed his understandable anxiety about the disposal of nuclear waste and about whether that would affect his constituency. He also related, and I agree with his point, the importance of industrial hazards. The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury also referred to the importance of the CIMAH regulations.

I recall being involved, in my time at the Department of the Environment, with the development of the CIMAH regulations. They stemmed from a European Community directive known as the Seveso directive arising from an assessment of the problems that occurred in Italy. A massive chemical problem occurred which was not simply confined to the town of Seveso and the unfortunate people living there, but also, by virtue of its size and the extent of the chemical clouds, threatened to drift across national boundaries and endanger other member states. That brought forward the move for a co-ordinated response, which led ultimately to the Seveso directive and the publication in the United Kingdom of new regulations under the CIMAH provisions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes will probably know that emergency planning provisions are available if things go wrong, but the planning provisions now applied allow local planning authorities to be made aware of the location and volume of stored substances so that a record may be kept and inspection carried out under the Health and Safety Executive auspices. That ensures that substances are not stored in a haphazard way and that one chemical is not stored adjacent to another which, if accidentally mixed with it, could cause the kind of disaster which my hon. Friend forecast could have occurred if chemicals had mixed together in the railway accident he mentioned.

I hope my hon. Friend will appreciate that the Government have moved a long way in our provisions for the handling of both nuclear and industrial chemical noxious substances. The emergency services are now well trained in how to deal with these hazards. The fire services now have a substantial knowledge of how to handle a whole range of hazardous substances which might leak into the public domain. The old-fashioned simple solution of squirting water on everything is no longer the way to deal with fires—far from it. It is an extremely effective and hazardous process conducted by professionals who have undergone a long training programme in dealing with many chemical substances.

I have digressed from the shape and substance of the Bill. I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster for doing that and for trespassing on his measure.

It is my hon. Friend's Bill. I should perhaps refer to him as "Up, Minister" because that is his function in relation to the House today. He will recall, and the House has been reminded of the fact, that our last manifesto included a commitment to legislate to enable civil defence resources to be used in a peacetime emergency. That is why I am glad that my hon. Friend has been able to deliver the commitment, which we all undertook, to bring it to the statute book, and it rests upon him to do so.

The differing views in the House and the country on the approach to civil defence are understood, but happily there is no disagreement—I welcome hearing that from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury—about the Bill's major thrust, which is that, when disaster strikes, available and appropriate resources can legitimately be used to bring relief.

The improved and improving level of civil defence preparedness of local authorities across the country means that there are considerably more resources on the ground than has been the case in recent years. County authorities should have available to them trained and experienced emergency planning staff. Hon. Members have paid tribute to them. In addition, they should have emergency centres from which activity can be co-ordinated and communications equipment with links to the emergency services. How useful they have been in recent civil disasters. They should also have a motivated and informed team of volunteers within the community. There are

obvious applications for such resources in peacetime emergencies as well as the potential wartime uses for which they have primarily been developed.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury was right when he said that it is the dual purpose—if I may put it that way—that lies behind this measure and the payment of grants for facilities which are being developed. There must be a duality of objectives.

The Government have been commending a broadly based, all-hazards approach to emergency planning. That approach recognises the common humanitarian aims of moulding responses to and plans for all emergencies in peace and war, whatever their cause.

The Government recognise also the practical applications in the use of resources. They also give valuable encouragement to an integrated approach to the planning process, with the skills acquired and lessons learned in discharging wartime planning responsibilities flowing through to inform peacetime emergency planning.

We hope that it will never be necessary to put into effect the contingency plans that are being developed for civil defence in wartime, but those plans are not just rarified paper exercises. Their starting point is a detailed knowledge, at a local level, of what is available, what are the problem areas and what can be done. There are considerable benefits to be had from carrying through that knowledge and experience in peacetime emergency planning. I have quoted the control of industrial major accident hazards as a good example of what is necessary for that purpose.

That kind of knowledge is perhaps one of the most valuable assets that can be applied to cope with peacetime disasters. However, new developments in the technology applied to civil defence will also be valuable. We are looking, for example, with local authorities at ways of building up local computer databases from which the kind of resources that might be needed to cope with any kind of emergency can be rapidly identified.

The hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury quoted an example of two trains, one perhaps carrying nuclear material and the other chemicals and the problems that might arise if they were to collide in a tunnel. Such data might be made available to an emergency planning centre to enable it to respond quickly and correctly to the complex chemical problem or the risk to the local population. A database of that type would be a significant advantage in co-ordinating a response to what is clearly a peacetime disaster.

We are also examining the ways in which the special wartime communications system, allocated to local authorities, can be effectively used in the event of peacetime emergencies. Changes in our planning assumptions have meant that we have had to develop civil defence planning to cope with a shorter time scale than ever before: improving our ability to identify and mobilise resources quickly, if needed. As planning becomes more complex, we are having to concentrate more on improving liaison between all the local authorities and public services involved, across local authority boundaries. These developments should also have clear implications for local authorities' ability to co-ordinate a response among themselves to peace-time disasters. We have long recognised, in practice, that resources allocated to civil defence can be and have been effectively applied by local authorities to cope with peacetime emergencies. It is only right that we should give statutory recognition to that fact.

This is not to suggest for a moment that peacetime emergencies and disasters, such as major floods, severe blizzards, leakage of dangerous chemicals are in any way to be equated with the large-scale and devastating horrors of war. This is especially true of the ultimate horror of nuclear war. Let us look rather at the practical effects. If a person is made homeless, his or her need for temporary accommodation is exactly the same, and must be relieved in a similar way, whether his house has been badly damaged by floods, contaminated or blown apart. If a person is buried in rubble, the cause of his predicament is not the first thought on his mind: he wants to be dug out.

Our critics may say, at least in peacetime there is someone to do the digging and some temporary accommodation standing which can be brought into service. Even given the worst scenario, however—the most terrible attack upon this country—there would be millions of survivors and a range of resources available to help them. The whole essence of civil defence is to ensure that those resources that can help are marshalled and are put to the most efficient use possible, through plans and preparations made in peacetime. Civil defence is not in any case geared solely to all-out nuclear attack. We believe that, in the unlikely event of war, the most likely form of attack would be conventional bombing, which has, I think, the closest parallels with the sorts of incidents we are now considering.

The Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster and supported and welcomed by all the major parties is designed to ensure that our insurance policy against war—the investment, both human and financial, in civil defence contingency planning — gives the community the best possible value. It will encourage the use of all available resources in any emergency, whatever its cause. It can make a positive contribution to the alleviation of the misery which disasters envitably bring. The Government are delighted to commend it to the House in the capable hands of my hon. Friend.

12.48 pm

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) has introduced the Bill. I have listened to the speech of the Minister of State, Home Office but I am certain that words will not bring about the protection that the Bill requires from the Government. Some positive actions have to be taken arising from the passage of such a Bill. I quote one sentence from the explanatory memorandum which states:

> "It also enables any local authority making plans for civil defence purposes to take into account the possible occurrence of such an emergency or disaster and makes provision in their plans for the use of their civil defence resources in that event."

I represent an area of Hackney which is one of the nuclear-free zones. Hackney borough council has protested against the transport of nuclear waste by train through that borough. Accidents may happen, and, indeed, do happen. If such an accident took place involving a train, the consequences for the people living near the event would be disastrous.

I attended the experiment when a train travelling at about 100 mph was crashed into a nuclear flask to see whether the flask would remain intact after impact. Although the testers said that they were certain that nothing untoward would happen, they used an empty flask. That showed that they had doubts. Afterwards, the

[Mr. Ernie Roberts]

flask did not look healthy to me, and I do not accept that that experiment guarantees safety in the event of an accident between a train and a nuclear flask.

In 1954 I was a Coventry city councillor, and I saw the explosion of the H-bomb on television. Coventry was badly bombed in 1941, and the people there know what high explosive bombs from the air mean for a city. When we on Coventry city council saw the effects of the hydrogen bomb, we knew that we could not possibly defend our citizens against that weapon. We were not prepared to kid our people any longer that we had a nuclear umbrella to protect them during nuclear warfare. That was the honest approach for a local authority to take, and an honest statement. We withdrew from civil defence at that time.

I was one of three councillors who met the Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, and the brass hats of civil defence to discuss civil defence. We were worried about it because while we knew that we could not defend our people against a nuclear attack, we still had the responsibility to defend them in the event of a public catastrophe, such as often took place in the engineering industry in Coventry. We insisted that the real defence of our people was based on real actions. We said that we needed an improved fire service — that was essential during attacks in the war — a good ambulance service, adequate hospital facilities and trained personnel to deal with public disasters.

Such disasters occurred and continue to occur throughout the country, for example at Flixborough. There are major accidents on the roads, the railways and in the air, and the most recent disaster that comes to mind is Sellafield. I do not deny that the population needs adequate civil defence during peacetime, but I will not allow it to be used as an excuse to persuade people that we have the defences to protect them against a nuclear attack, because that is sheer nonsense.

I put a series of questions about civil defence to Sir David Maxwell Fyfe and the Government of the day 30 years ago. I am still waiting for those answers to questions put to the then Government about the real and adequate defence measures that would be necessary in the event of some kind of nuclear disaster.

The last sentence of the Bill's explanatory and financial memorandum states:

> "The Bill is not expected to have any significant financial implications and will have no effect on public service manpower."

That is a disaster and it is wrong to make such a statement.

We need more expenditure on civil defence for the British people and more manpower. In support of that statement Britain's firemen lobbied the Government yesterday against the cuts in fire services. Fire stations are being closed down. Doctors and nurses have lobbied against cuts and closures in hospital services, which we must have in the event of a disaster so that people can receive the treatment required. Ambulance workers have also lobbied the Government against cuts in ambulance services.

It is not enough to acknowledge the need for real civil defence in peacetime to enable people to cope with public disasters. In supporting the Bill the Government must make sure that they provide what is needed to protect the people, whether fire, ambulance or hospital services or trained personnel, and that will mean more expenditure on those services.

12.57 pm

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) began his speech by telling us that Hackney was a nuclear-free zone, as indeed is the Greater London council area. Basildon district council is also a nuclear-free zone. I note that the sidings of Liverpool street station come within the Hackney borough council area and I shall be careful in future always to make sure that I catch the fast train to my constituency so as to avoid having to stop in Brentwood, which is not a nuclear-free zone. No doubt all my constituents will follow that advice. If they have any sense they will catch the fast train anyway, but for rather different reasons from those advanced by the hon. Gentleman.

I speak briefly for two reasons. The first is warmly to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on introducing the Bill. The Billericay constituency borders on the Upminster constituency. Therefore, as an Essex Member of Parliament I am delighted to be able to take this opportunity to congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing a Bill that commits local authorities

> "to use their civil defence resources in counteracting the effects of peacetime emergencies and disasters as well as the effects of wartime hostile attack",

and further

> "empowers a local authority to use any of their civil defence resources in taking action to deal with the effects of any emergency or disaster likely to be destructive or dangerous to life or property in their area".

I am sure that the vast majority of my constituents would regard that as elementary common sense. My hon. Friend has an abundance of common sense and so it is right that he should be the Bill's promoter.

The second reason for my seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was the robust speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) dealing with the potential dangers and difficulties in his constituency, particularly at Flixborough. During his speech my hon. Friend mentioned that he had two oil refineries in his constituency — Conoco and Lindsey. Therefore, I share with him two similarities. We were the first two graduates from York university to enter the House of Commons and we both have oil refineries in our constituency.

In my constituency I have Mobil Oil at Coryton and Shell at Shellhaven. Anyone who has that sort of industrial development or such hazardous industries in his constituency will greatly welcome the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster. In fact, listening to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes when he was dealing with the hazards and difficulties that can arise in a constituency and the usefulness of this Bill in the event of such problems, I found myself thinking, "There but for the grace of God go I and nearly every other hon. Member sitting in Parliament today", because there is always the possibility that something could go wrong.

Having said that I want to place on record that I believe that the oil refineries in my constituency are responsible and know the dangers and problems that can arise from their operations. I thank them for their openness and

frankness in always contacting me whenever they envisage a problem or when anything has gone wrong in a small way to alert me to the problem and the reasons for it.

The Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster could be useful with a number of other difficulties that could affect my constituency. Thirty years ago my constituency was affected by flooding. In fact, the opening of the Mobil site was affected by flooding. My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the difficulties and problems of water and the usefulness of civil defence in dealing with such problems.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington mentioned nuclear waste. I too have a railway line running through my constituency, from Wickford to Billericay. Nuclear waste in flasks is carried on that railway line from Bradwell nuclear power station. Therefore, I am concerned that the transport of nuclear waste should be conducted safely. I have travelled on the train through my constituency to assure myself that all that can be done is done to ensure that the transport of those nuclear flasks is conducted in a safe and proper manner.

I thought that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington was rather carping about the CEGB experiment where it crashed a train into a nuclear flask. I thought that that was a remarkably good experiment. It reassured the vast majority of my constituents that those nuclear flasks were as safe as they could be. I have four railway stations in my constituency. It is conceivable that the terms of the Bill could be triggered into action by an incident at one of those stations.

I want to pay tribute to all of the emergency services that operate within my constituency. They do a remarkably good job and nothing in the Bill takes that away from them.

On Tuesday 4 February I had the great honour and privilege of visiting the fire service college at Moreton in the Marsh. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister of State will refer to the appropriate Minister in the Home Office how impressed I was with everything that I saw and heard concerning the training of our firemen at the college.

It is stupid that, for legislative reasons, everything possible cannot be done to prepare for ordeal with disaster. The Bill removes one of the legislative hurdles or blocks and I believe that it will reach the statute book. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster deserves great tribute for having pushed it there.

1.5 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I thank everyone who has contributed to the debate for the support and assistance that has been given to the Bill. It is especially pleasing to hear support from the Opposition Benches, particularly from the Opposition Front Bench. I was pleased to hear what the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) had to say. It is pleasant to be able to agree on a great deal of the contents of the Bill and on the need to improve, as far as we can, the peacetime services that are available in the event of disaster. I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman say that it is the duty of this Government, and of any other Administration which runs the country, to attempt to provide a humanitarian response to disaster of whatever type.

It would be impossible for us to agree on everything. We do not agree, for example, about the wartime provisions that it is necessary for the Government to take. In the context of the Bill, I do not need to be drawn too far along that road. However, it is an issue that we should discuss at another time.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) have visited Hiroshima, which I have not. However, I shall never forget reading some years ago the horrifying eye-witness account of someone who survived the Hiroshima disaster. He was a boy of 10 years when it occurred. He described how he went swimming with his friends. He dived into the water and while he was beneath the surface he felt an almighty explosion. He described it as a sort of drum beat on the surface. When he surfaced, there was no town and no friends and he had no family. However, he survived. Many of those on the fringes of Hiroshima survived in the most appalling conditions that it is possible for us to imagine fellow human beings having to suffer.

In those circumstances, horrific as they are—God forbid that we ever have to suffer them in Britain—it is wrong for anyone to take the line that there can be no place for a civil defence and civil protection movement which is prepared for action. In fringe areas where people and buildings have not been utterly destroyed and where life remains, there will still be a place for an organisation to help and control. I shall not pursue that issue any further this afternoon.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) and for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) spoke of the possibility of a non-war nuclear disaster as a result of leaks from our power stations. There are those who oppose having nuclear power stations in Britain on that ground, but I am not one of them. I believe that the safeguards are as good as we can hope for and that we must have the availability of nuclear fuels if we are to be able to compete with our European competitors, who have already moved well ahead in the nuclear power industry.

There is a danger to Britain whether we have nuclear power stations or not when our neighbours do. The clouds of radioactivity that would stem from any major nuclear leak from a power station, if it were to emanate in France or any other European country, would pose as great a risk to Britain as a leak that emanated from this country. It is important that that eventuality is taken into account when we consider the steps that must be taken in preparing for civil protection.

My hon. Friends the Members for Harborough and for Brigg and Cleethorpes spoke about train and lorry crashes and the possibility of a combination of both. That is already in the minds of those responsible for civil defence exercises. Railchem 84, an exercise with precisely that risk in mind, took place two years ago. That exercise involved the collision of a road tanker carrying a chemical with a British Rail passenger train at a level crossing in an imaginary village. Many local councils took part in the exercise and it was extremely useful. The Bill will encourage such exercises.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes mentioned his constituents' fears after the Flixborough leak. Their fear is understandable. It should be felt throughout the country because of the complexity of chemical plants and the way in which chemicals are stored. Their fear is fully justified. We have a duty to heed that fear. For those reasons I believe that the provision of peacetime civil protection is essential and I am delighted to put the Bill before the House.

Question put and agreed to.

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Tobacco Products (Sports Sponsorship) Bill

Order for Second reading read.

1.10 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am not an anti-smoking fanatic. I am a non-smoker, but I accept that many people, including members of my family and friends, find pleasure in smoking. However, I confess that I sometimes wish that smokers would be more considerate about where and how they smoke. I do not pursue a vendetta against smokers, although smokers are now in a minority in our community.

The evidence is massive and incontrovertible on the extent to which smoking is responsible for disease and death. Smoking is the largest avoidable cause of illness and death in Britain.

I commend to hon. Members the publication "The Big Kill" which analyses the figures for deaths from smoking-related diseases, the illnesses caused by smoking and how hospital beds are occupied unnecessarily. The figures are analysed district by district and give food for thought.

The chief medical officer at the Department of Health and Social Security estimates that 100,000 premature deaths per year are caused by smoking. It is a sobering figure. This very week 2,000 people died earlier than they might have done because of smoking-related diseases. If tobacco had just been discovered and had been subjected to the tests to which new products are subjected it would never have been allowed on the market. However, I accept that smoking is now well established and that prohibition would be neither practicable nor even desirable. It is certainly not practicable and I do not advocate it. However, it is the duty of Government and Parliament to ensure that the population is informed and educated about the effects of smoking. It is our duty to encourage smokers, if they will not cease smoking, to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke. We have a special duty to dissuade the young from taking up smoking in the first place.

The Health Education Council and Action on Smoking and Health both receive some financial aid from the DHSS and they both mount energetic campaigns. However, their resources are pitifully small compared to the enormous sums spent by the tobacco industry in promoting and advertising its products. Some of that promotion is carried out by sponsorship. There are restrictions on the extent to which tobacco products may be advertised. There are health warnings on packets and on advertisements and one cannot advertise cigarettes on television.

My specific concern is the sponsorship by tobacco companies of sporting events. The purpose of sponsorship of such events is quite clearly to publicise the company and its products and services with a view to selling them. That is a perfectly proper activity and one that is carried out by banks, insurance companies and a number of commercial concerns for the purpose of getting their names across to the target audience. They may well feel that by spending their funds sponsoring a concert or a cricket match or some similar activity, they are getting to that audience more effectively than by advertising in a newspaper.

Mr. Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): I do not want to interrupt my hon. Friend's train of thought and I

certainly agree with him that nobody in the House would accept for one moment that the tobacco companies are benevolent organisations. They are there for a commercial and presentational role. No doubt my hon. Friend will talk the House through the first three clauses in his Bill. The fourth clause is fairly straightforward. Clause 1(1) says:

"The Secretary of State may by Order make provision for the prohibition of expenditure on sponsorship by tobacco companies of sporting events,"

Is my hon. Friend able to rest easy with that, because many hon. Members on the Government side feel it is more akin to the sentiments of the Opposition? Is my hon. Friend happy and are his constituents happy with that phraseology? Which Secretary of State does it mean?

Mr. Sims: I am perfectly content with that. That is the object of my Bill and precisely the argument that I am seeking to develop, about why a Secretary of State should be given that power. I think it will be the Secretary of State for Social Services, but to the extent that we are dealing with sports matters it may be a matter for the Secretary of State for the Environment. My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport is replying to the debate so it would appear to fall within the ambit of the Secretary of State for the Environment.

I am not critical of sponsorship as a form of advertising, and cigarette companies sponsor sports events for exactly the same purpose as any other commercial concern, to sell their products and to get their names known. At some sporting functions sponsored by cigarette companies, the companies sell or even give away their products. The object is quite clearly to promote the product and get new customers for it. My objection to tobacco companies sponsoring sporting events is that it gives the impression that there is some connection, some correlation between sport, which is a good healthy activity, and smoking. The companies hope that smoking will be perceived as a healthy activity, when we all know that it is precisely the reverse.

During the past few years, general sponsorship has grown substantially. Between 1981 and 1984, the number of companies involved in sports sponsorship doubled from more than 700 to more than 1,400. The estimated expenditure on that sponsorship increased from £50 million to about £112 million. Of the 1,400 companies involved in this sponsorship, only 22 are tobacco companies, but it is noticeable that they are especially involved in the events that receive much media coverage. To their credit, sports such as swimming and athletics do not accept sponsorship from tobacco companies, and the Football Association has said that it will not accept sponsorship from tobacco companies because it does not believe that it would be appropriate to do so.

There are two important aspects of the media coverage of such events. The first is the extent to which a sponsored sport appears on television. It is estimated that, in one year, about 365 hours of sport sponsored by tobacco companies is seen on television. By far the largest is snooker, which occupies about 176 hours. Cricket occupies 65 hours and many other sports, including tennis, golf and darts, are seen for many hours on television. In all of them, the product name is seen frequently and displayed in large, unavoidable terms. Indeed, in some cases, the participants can be seen on television smoking cigarettes.

That raises the question whether the BBC is allowing its charter to be contravened, because it states specifically that there shall be no advertising. The ITV rules are that there should be no advertising of tobacco products, especially cigarettes. But that is frequently done in breach of the advertising industry's code of practice. The voluntary code of practice on tobacco products states:

"Advertisements should not imply that smoking is associated with success in sport. They should not depict people participating in any active sporting pursuit or obviously about to do so or just having done so, or spectators at any organised sporting occasion.".

Anyone who watches television for any time will draw his own conclusion as to the extent to which the code is being complied with.

One clause of the sports sponsorship agreement requires that static signs displaying the name of the sponsor or the product should be placed so as to minimise the possibility of freeze frame shots having the signs in view for long periods. Sometimes they seem to be placed so as to maximise that. Another part of the code provides that:

"House brand names or symbols on participants or their equipment or on officials of tobacco sponsored events, must not come within camera range."

How often does one see on sports cars and on people's clothing the name clearly shown? Hon. Members can judge for themselves the effectiveness of those agreements and codes.

What worries me especially is the effect on children. It has been estimated that a quarter of all children under the age of 16 watch Embassy snooker. It must have some effect on them. Dr. Frank Ledwith, research fellow at the department of education, university of Manchester, has carried out some very interesting research. He states:

"A representative survey of 880 children in first, third and fifth years was carried out in five secondary schools in one education authority using an anonymous questionnaire. It was found that children were most aware of the cigarette brands which are most frequently associated with sponsored sporting events on TV. Children's TV viewing of a recent snooker championship sponsored by one cigarette manufacturer was positively correlated with the proportion of children associating that brand, and other brands used in TV sponsorship, with sport. Following a snooker championship sponsored by another cigarette manufacturer, a second survey was carried out on a new sample showing that awareness of this brand, and the proportion of children associating it with sport, had increased from the first survey."

There cannot be much clearer proof than that of the effect of television sponsorship of sporting events by tobacco companies.

One could ask whether all this matters, whether it is important and whether it has any effect. The fact is that children are a very good market for tobacco products. Recent figures show that 41 per cent. of children are smoking at the age of 16. This is a horrifying figure. It has also been demonstrated that between the ages of 11 and 16, children spend about £70 million on cigarettes. This is illegal and must be a reflection upon tobacco retailers. Somebody is selling the product to children. But that is very much to the advantage of the tobacco companies. It is a lucrative market for them. There is also a good chance that if children begin to smoke at that age they will be cigarette smokers for life. It is no wonder therefore that tobacco companies believe it to be particularly worthwhile to sponsor sporting events.

My Bill proposes to prevent that kind of sponsorship. It will not stop it immediately but it will be stopped over a period of three years. It is argued that if sponsorship is banned, sporting events will collapse.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Sims: I suspect that I am about to answer my hon. Friend's question, but I shall allow him, nevertheless, to make his point.

Mr. Proctor: I am not sure that my hon. Friend intends to deal with it. Therefore, I should like to put my question to him before he deals with the next stage of his argument. My hon. Friend is a distinguished parliamentary adviser to the Scotch Whisky Association. Would my hon. Friend extend the principle of his Bill to whisky companies and prevent them from sponsoring sporting events?

Mr. Sims: No, I would not. My hon. Friend is right to point out the position which I occupy, but I find no difficulty in reconciling the two kinds of sponsorship. There is a clear difference between alcohol and cigarette products. If it is used in moderation, alcohol can do one good. Most of us enjoy a little alcohol. The problem arises when the use of alcohol is abused——

Mr. Proctor *rose*——

Mr. Sims: Let me finish my sentence. I am as concerned as anybody about the abuse of alcohol. I am involved with various committees that seek to educate and inform people about that problem. It has been proved beyond doubt that cigarettes are harmful per se. Therefore, alcohol and cigarettes cannot be compared. I have no difficulty in reconciling my views on these two products.

Mr. Proctor *rose*——

Mr. Sims: I do not wish to be drawn into an argument, because I want other hon. Members to have the opportunity to speak in the debate. However, I shall allow my hon. Friend to get in again because he is obviously worried about this point.

Mr. Proctor: My hon. Friend said that some people believe that alcohol does one good. Therefore he says that people should be allowed to make a choice. A number of my constituents—though not me, because I am a non-smoker — believe that it is therapeutic to smoke cigarettes. Why does he take a different view in principle about alcohol compared with tobacco?

Mr. Sims: The short answer is that I have ample medical evidence in respect of both. The spirits industry takes it upon itself not to advertise on television. I do not think that a precise comparison can be made, but I do not blame my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) for trying it on.

Some of my colleagues might suggest that the sports would collapse without the sponsorship of tobacco companies. That is hard to believe. I have said that about £112 million a year is spent on sports sponsorship. Of that, about £8 million is estimated to come from the tobacco companies. One can hardly suggest that losing £8 million would make all that much difference and that it could not be replaced. A large number of companies would be happy to take over the sponsorship. When the sponsorship by a tobacco products company was withdrawn from a London orchestra, other sponsors quickly stepped in. The statistics show that, if one sponsor withdraws, another is usually arranged within two or three months.

I am sure that the sports will find no difficulty, especially as the provisions will be phased in over a three-year period, in finding other sponsors. This applies particularly to those companies I have mentioned that enjoy a great deal of television coverage. I understand that there is a waiting list of companies interested in sponsoring certain sports. One imagines that some of the up and coming companies in the electronics business would welcome such exposure.

I suggest that the Bill will not be any danger to sports. I gently point out to Ministers that the Government raised £4·5 billion a year in taxes on tobacco and that a further tax of 0·25p on 20 cigarettes would produce enough money to cover all sports sponsorship money at present received from tobacco companies.

I appreciate that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment — the hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) — who has responsibility for sport, will tell me that, until now, this matter has been handled by voluntary agreement and that he is negotiating a further voluntary agreement and would like to continue along that course. I understand that, but I am bound to say that experience suggests that any such voluntary agreement is likely to be breached in as many respects as the existing voluntary agreement. I suggest that the fact that a new agreement is pending does not prevent my hon. Friend from accepting the Bill. My legislation will not become active until the Secretary of State makes an order to implement it. It will be enforced over a three-year period.

Smoking is dangerous to health—it says so on every packet. Our duty is to discourage smoking. One of the best ways of doing this is by supporting my Bill, which will curtail and eventually eliminate sponsorship of sporting events by tobacco companies. I hope that the Bill has the support of the House.

1.33 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I cannot praise the hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) too much, not only for the way in which he has presented the Bill but for his constant endeavours with respect to prevention rather than treatment. Over the years he has achieved a reputation on both sides of the House for his health work. The Bill continues that tradition.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Chislehurst on choosing this subject, which seeks to prevent death and illness. I believe that this cigarettes legislation and the Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill, which concerns children under 16, are supported across the board, politically and socially, in the community at large. The hon. Gentleman rightly said that pressure should be most intense to stop people contracting the habit. The House recently discussed the Tobacco Products (Sales Restriction) Bill dealing with the £70 million which children under the age of 16 are spending on cigarettes. If that Bill is passed alongside this, that would be the greatest step forward for many years.

As long ago as 1960 Sir George Godber, the chief medical officer of health, said in the DHSS annual report:

"To prevent illness, if one could do something in this field, it would be the greatest step this century".

In pursuing his line, the hon. Gentleman is pursuing a well-worn track. The House accepts that the hon. Gentleman is the last person to be fanatical about a subject. The idea that there are many people who are anti-something, and that British people want to stop and prohibit everything, has nothing to do with the hon. Member for Chislehurst. As I have said previously, if I

could find a non-carcinogenic, non-emphysemic, non-bronchitic cigarette, I would be happy for the good Lord to put chimneys on people's heads to allow them to smoke ad nauseam.

That is not the case, and the evidence about smoking is now clear. The hon. Gentleman, in giving the weekly figure, ought to pull the House up short in its tracks. Last week 2,000 people died, another 2,000 people will die this week, and next week 2,000 more will die, from smoke-related diseases. If that number of deaths occurred through jumbo jets crashing there would be headlines across the world. If a tourist coach crashed in Parliament square and 100 or so people were killed in one collision, something would be done.

The hon. Gentleman's argument is based on the fact that the inevitable consequence of smoking is death. Therefore, if one can stop the promotion of cigarettes to young people in one way or another, and specifically in the way the hon. Gentleman has suggested—in sports sponsorship—that would not only save life and medical bills but would prevent many tragedies.

The number of smoke-related deaths in people under 65 is horrendous. One should not just count the wage earner in the statistics of those who die under the age of 65, but should also include the consequences of the tragedy for the wage-earner's family. A man aged 44 died in hospital in my constituency, leaving four children. The consequence of his death goes beyond his decision to smoke; it has a consequence for the community.

The hon. Gentleman is going with the trend to consider sports sponsorship, as so much these days is decided by image and not by words. People project an image. The image projected to youngsters is that motor racing around Brooklands is marvellous and should be associated with a manly endeavour, but it is odd that it should be related to acting like a child with a dummy and sucking on a piece of white paper wrapped around tobacco. That is the manly image that is promoted and it is that which continues the sale of cigarettes to youngsters under the age of 16.

The hon. Member for Chislehurst was quite right to ask the Minister with responsibility for sport to examine the matter thoroughly. The Minister was kind enough to receive a deputation that I accompanied the other day and he listened to the case in connection with the present negotiations. The Minister should note that voluntary codes of practice are too frequently broken. The classic example of that occurred during Wimbledon tennis fortnight, two years ago.

It also happened recently, as the hon. Member for Chislehurst will recall, with the picture in *The Observer*. *The Observer* carried an advert with a picture of a car and a caption referring to the quality of the car and the driver. However, the large print name underneath the picture, "Marlboro", implied more strongly that the quality was due to the cigarettes. The Minister said that the advertisement was rather near the knuckle. He did not use those words, because Ministers do not reply in such a way. He was far more polite, and said that it was near the edge.

When the Minister is making his arrangements, will he consider sanctions to ensure that, if the code is broken, there is some way in which the company involved can be penalised?

I hate to mix my metaphors and talk about a liquid as a red herring, but in previous debates it as been suggested that if one thing is bad it should be compared with something else. When my children were young, if my daughter was naughty, my son always claimed that he was good. The clinical difficulty with some comparisons is that carcinogenic agents do not require that a quantity be smoked. A light smoker can contract carcinoma of the lung because the carcinogenic agent does not proliferate. If one contracts the disease, that is it. Quantity does not come into the matter because one does not contract the disease by smoking a good deal, but only by smoking.

I believe that most Members have received the document "The Big Kill". In the Brent district health authority area there were 369 deaths last year. There were 152 deaths from heart disease, 159 from lung cancer and 58 from bronchitis and emphysema. My area has closed one hospital. I am busy consulting the authority about the closure of another one. Chest and heart diseases last year cost Brent £600,000. That is a considerable sum. I would sooner see that money spent on the elderly and the other things that the area needs, rather than on treating a preventable illness.

I received a parliamentary answer the other day and found some of the comparisons in it rather surprising. The House and the country are worried about hard drug abuse. It is a problem to which the Government are paying attention; a Bill is going through the House. One wonders whether the Government have double standards when dealing with one form of addiction compared with another. In 1983, there were 64 deaths from morphine-type drugs in England and Wales. There were 14 deaths from morphine and other types of drugs and there was one death from a morphine-type non-dependent abuse of drugs.

In the same answer, the Minister was kind enough to tell me that the Government recognise that 100,000 people die prematurely from the effects of smoking. I will not weary the House—I know many other hon. Members wish to take part in the debate—with the amount spent on drug and nicotine abuse and the promotion of smoking.

It is interesting to note that, in another answer, I was told that £55·5 million is spent on advertising. It is believed that over £100 million is spent on persuading people to smoke, by sports sponsorship and other means. The Government provide a total of £3·5 million. There is an uneven tug of war. About £100 million is spent on telling people to smoke and £3·5 million on telling them to refrain. Cigarette-related diseases cost the National Health Service £370 million a year. That is a large chunk out of the resources available for other important matters. I was interested to see another answer I received which stated that, if one put 6p on a packet of cigarettes, the Exchequer would take in £190 million.

The House and the country approve of sport, especially for young people. We do not want youngsters hanging about street corners, finding themselves at a loose end because they have left school and are out of work. Sport is promoted by the Government through the Central Council for Physical Recreation and through the efforts of the Minister with responsibility for sport. It therefore seems ridiculous that the Government cannot find the £8 million for sports sponsorship to provide sport for young people.

In 1966 Kenneth Robinson, a former Minister, introduced a ban on advertising for the Independent Broadcasting Authority. The hon. Member for Chislehurst has pointed out that the BBC, which does not advertise at all, is taking the brunt of advertising cigarettes through its

[Mr. Laurie Pavitt]

sports sponsorship. This is not only against the BBC's charter but against the intentions of all Governments of the past 20 years to promote sport for young people.

I hope that the Bill will get a further hearing. I realise, of course, that we are too late for a closure. This question goes across the Floor of the House and is not a party matter. I ask the Minister whether it is not possible for the House itself, without any Whips, to come to a decision on this matter. If that could be arranged, I am fairly certain that if — in spite of the well-known efforts of the consultants for British American Tobacco, Imperial Tobacco and others; hon. Members who have constituency interests and are naturally concerned about employment — the House itself could have the opportunity of a Second Reading on this excellent Bill, then the House, in Committee, will be able to take it forward. This is no more revolutionary than asking for a three-year span after a decision is taken. We are talking possibly of five years; at the rate of 100,000 deaths a year, that is still a long process. I hope that the House will take this step in order to secure a Second Reading.

I am not concerned with the cost of illness alone. Death through chronic bronchitis or emphysema is torture to a degree which one cannot behold without revulsion. No human being ought to die in that way. We all have to die some time and that is acceptable — it has to be acceptable, as there is no alternative. To die gasping and scrabbling for every breath, and to spend weeks in a cardio-thoracic ward — any of us who have witnessed our friends or relations in that situation never want to see it again. If the hon. Member for Chislehurst has his way, then, although I will see such suffering, my own children will not see it in the future.

1.48 pm

Mr. Michael Knowles (Nottingham, East): I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) and also with the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt). I represent a Nottingham seat, and although I do not have a direct constituency interest, there is a large tobacco factory in the next constituency and undoubtedly some of my constituents work there.

There is no need for my hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for sport to look anxious. I am not making a guest appearance after being in "Yes, Prime Minister" the other week. He will recall that I am a Nottingham Member with the same interest as that fictional sports Minister.

I am worried about various points. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst should remember that when this campaign is over — I do not believe that it will be successful — and the tobacco industry has been destroyed, the banning lobby will move to alcohol. Indeed, there are already signs of that. There is always something to ban. Indeed, early in life I concluded that for anything I enjoyed there was a lobby which wanted to ban it. As I have a wife and three daughters—I am glad to say that none of my daughters smokes — and I both drink and smoke, I spend most of my money on women, smoking and drink and squander the rest. I expect that that is true of many hon. Members.

When I listened to the debate the apposite parallel of Macaulay speaking about the Puritans and bear baiting came to mind. They banned bear baiting, not for the pain that it caused the bear, but for the pleasure that it gave to the spectators. That feeling always lurks when somebody wants to ban something. One can always make a good case. One could make a good case for banning alcohol. Indeed, the United States tried prohibition, but it was unsuccessful.

The major anxiety of those concerned with the hard drug scene in London and Nottingham is not hard drugs or tobacco, but alcohol. Alcohol is the most dangerous drug because of alcoholism and the other problems that it produces, and I do not doubt that the lobby will move on to ban alcohol next. I disagree with that because people and industries should be allowed to choose.

The tobacco companies have been diversifying into other areas. For a long time the industry has been dwindling for various reasons, including public opinion. People have stopped smoking. It has been said that a large number of young people smoke, but my subjective impression is that fewer smoke than in my young day. My eldest daughter is 18 and my twins are 15. When I was their age it was rare for young people not to smoke, but now it is rare for them to smoke. The change has been as great as that. I believe that in the long term a hard core of smokers will remain, but gone are the days when the vast majority of the population smokes. For that reason, the tobacco industry must diversify and has done so successfully. It has also spent large sums on trying to find harmless alternatives to tobacco.

Under clause 3, "tobacco product" means, not only any form of tobacco, but

"smoking mixtures intended as a substitute for tobacco."

The hon. Member for Brent, South said that if he could find a harmless substitute, he would be happy with it, but the Bill will ban anything and everything.

Mr. Macfarlane: I was interested in my hon. Friend's reference to the insidious effects of alcohol. Those of us who have been concerned with these matters for some years and who have a genuine love for the sporting arena conclude that the presence of alcohol, in whatever form, is infinitely more disruptive socially, whether in the sports arena or family circle, than tobacco. I do not deny the statistics given by the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt). My hon. Friend represents the fair city of Nottingham which has two soccer teams which, happily, have a fairly good reputation for good behaviour. The point that I am trying to make is that alcohol, related to sporting events, has an infinitely more disruptive social effect than the product that we are discussing today.

Mr. Knowles: I agree. We must take on board, as I am sure my hon. Friend the Minister will later, the fact that the stark reality that any Government must face is that tobacco taxation still raises £4 billion. There is no immediate way of doing away with that without vastly increasing taxes in other areas. Therefore, I refute the idea that the destruction of the industry would be a good thing. Making up lost revenue would impinge on other areas fairly dramatically.

It is not that tobacco companies are after new smokers in the form of young people. What they are concerned with is brand share. That is what they are chasing. Cigarette smoking is not a growing area. They know that it is dwindling but they will fight tooth and nail to get more of their present share of the market, and so would anyone else in the same position.

Mr. Proctor: The statistics to prove my hon. Friend's points are that in 1970 the consumption of manufactured cigarettes was 127,900,000. Last year that figure had fallen to 97,500,000.

Mr. Knowles: Indeed. I do not think that a Newcastle Member is here, but a large factory employing over 1,000 people closed there only last year just because of the lack of demand.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): There has been a drop in demand, but there has also been a considerable increase in mechanisation so that a smaller number of people are required to produce the same number of cigarettes.

Mr. Knowles: That is true. However, the number of cigarettes and other tobacco products that are sold has dropped at the same time. What is happening in the tobacco industry is what one sees happening in many other industries as technology moves forward — a smaller work force is needed. If that happens in a shrinking industry the effect is even more devastating. That is precisely what has happened.

It was said earlier that sports are all healthy. In the main all would agree with that but I sometimes arrive home from the House early in the evening and see darts and snooker on the television and I remember lectures from my father about a misspent youth in the snooker hall.

It is true that companies advertise to promote their products. That is a natural thing to do and they are bound to do it. Undoubtedly, tobacco can cause illness and eventually, in some cases, death. But that is true of alcohol as well. If we go too far down this path we shall produce a nanny state. People must be left with their freedom.

By coincidence, I received a letter this morning from the Nottinghamshire county cricket club asking me to speak in the debate. I was planning to anyway, but it comes as a rather useful piece of ammunition. That letter points out how much it and other cricket clubs have depended on tobacco sponsorship over the past 25 years. It also makes the strong point that probably only a minority of people would support the banning of tobacco sponsorship, and that is generally true. The British public are not keen on banning things and it shows the soundness of British public opinion that they are generally prepared to let people live their own lives.

Mr. Macfarlane: In the context of Nottinghamshire county cricket club is my hon. Friend not aware that, Chislehurst is in the Kent county cricket club location? Kent county cricket club has done very well in winning much tobacco sponsorship and support in recent years and, of course, a great deal of prize money. Does my hon. Friend not consider that some of the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) may have applauded Kent's success?

Mr. Knowles: I do not doubt that. I thank my hon. Friend for that comment. I am not just concerned about the period of time over which sports have been dependent on sponsorship from tobacco companies. I believe that over 60 sports have received sponsorship from tobacco companies of one kind or another, from the grass roots to the high profile.

A particular point has been made about sponsorship appearing on television, but there is a great deal of money which goes to fairly small clubs which never appear on television so there is no direct benefit to the company. I believe that it should be up to the sporting bodies to make their decision about whether to accept sponsorship rather than for it to be banned from some source.

I believe that next Friday there will be a Bill about business sponsorship for the arts. I do not doubt that the arts would love more tobacco sponsorship or more sponsorship from anywhere because they desperately need money. To chop off that sponsorship, even over a fairly short period, let alone overnight, could have a devastating effect on many sports. I do not believe that the British public, on the whole, would support this. It is not in favour of dictating to other people how they should live their lives. It is quite happy to let them get on with it and accept the consequences, even if they are ill consequences. I support that judgment.

2.2 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On behalf of the Labour party I welcome the Bill and I am pleased that the hon. Member for Chiselhurst (Mr. Sims) has found the opportunity to introduce this sensible, moderate and staged measure. In response to some abusive remarks made about him on the radio this morning by one of the paid representatives of the tobacco industry, I would like to say that he is not an oddball, and those who support the proposition are not oddballs. The health organisations which support the Bill are certainly not oddballs because they are the British Medical Association and the Royal College of Physicians. If I have to take advice on health and have to choose between the representatives of the British tobacco industry and the Royal College of Physicians I know which advice I will listen to.

Smoking kills 100,000 people a year. The tobacco industry is unique because it is the only industry which kills 100,000 of its customers every year. Consequently, if it is to stand still it has to recruit another 100,000 smokers every year or it will go down even quicker, the natural choice is making it go now.

Mr. Macfarlane: I do not want to disrupt the hon. Gentleman. A few moments ago he said that he was speaking on behalf of the Labour party. I would like to be certain that he is now speaking for the shadow environment team, because, for a variety of very good reasons, no doubt his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) is not in his place. We are anxious to know whether his comments would carry the right hon. Gentleman and whether they would be endorsed by him.

Mr. Dobson: I cannot speak for my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell), who is absent for other reasons. However, it is now and has been since 1982 the policy of the Labour party that we wish to stop the sponsorship of sport by tobacco companies. That will remain our policy. I shall return to the subject that is under discussion and leave the sideshow of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane), who has made enough interventions already.

Faced with a loss of 100,000 customers a year, the tobacco industry is hard pressed to recruit new smokers.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood) *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: No, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman. I shall not give way if hon. Members wish to make interventions of the sort made by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam.

Parliament has restricted the scope of the tobacco industry to advertise and promote smoking. As a consequence, the industry has turned to sponsorship. There are various estimates, and it is difficult to track down the correct figure, but it is believed that between £8 million and £10 million is contributed by the industry towards sponsoring and promoting sport.

Why is this happening? Is sponsorship an altruistic activity of the industry? The answer is no, of course it is not. The law requires the directors of tobacco companies as well as other companies to promote shareholders' interests. Their actions should benefit shareholders, and the actions of tobacco companies in sponsoring sport and promoting the sales of cigarettes are intended to benefit shareholders by increased sales or by maintaining the level of sales. This is done by deliberately associating sport with smoking in the mind of the public, especially the young public.

The industry's investment in sport sponsorship is aimed at recruiting new smokers, especially new young smokers. Its success is shown by the surveys that have been undertaken in Manchester and other areas, to which the hon. Member for Chislehurst, referred. The industry has found an ace way of skirting the restrictions which Parliament has placed on its right generally to advertise.

Who can fault the industry? It has been extremely successful. The most recent figures that I have been able to obtain show that there were 323 hours of tobacco-sponsored sport on television in 1984. I understand that half a minute of advertising time that is networked by ITV —I checked this today—costs about £80,000. A minute of advertising time would, therefore, cost £160,000, and an hour would cost £9·6 million. The tobacco companies are enjoying free advertising on both channels, but mainly on the BBC, for about 323 hours a year. If they had had to pay for that advertising in 1984, it would have cost them in excess of £3,100 million.

Mr. Proctor *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: No, I am not giving way. The Minister will want to reply, and I wish to ensure that he has time in which to do so.

To obtain 323 hours of free advertising, the tobacco companies contributed to sport the princely sum of about £10 million. One of my criticisms of sporting bodies is that even if they have to obtain sponsorship, they are making a pretty poor fist of securing a good bargain. The extent to which they are benefiting must be set against the benefits that the tobacco companies are enjoying as a result of the arrangement.

In this context, I am sickened by the BBC's behaviour. BBC executives — some of whom live in my constituency—write to me to the effect that the BBC should not be made to carry advertising. It transpires that they do not oppose advertising in itself. Instead, they oppose being paid for it. I regard that as carrying the cult of the amateur to a ludicrous extreme.

Unlike the BBC, the Independent Television Authority is beoming increasingly concerned about free advertising, presumably partly because it undermines its position and the position of television companies generally in selling advertising. That is one of their legitimate concerns and I understand that they are having discussions with Ministers.

I speak as a sports fanatic. I am no longer a participant, as observation of my corpulent frame will show. I spend a great deal of my time watching sport, reading about it and talking to others about it, and I have no doubt that I shall continue to do so. But what are the sports doing which are obtaining sponsorship? The sports know that smoking is unhealthy. Those involved in sport know as well as the president of the Royal College of Physicians that smoking kills. They know that that form of advertising promotes tobacco sales. Our policy is to resort to statutory prohibition because the tobacco companies and the sports cannot be trusted to exercise restraint.

We are told that sport is intended to promote and sustain healthy minds in healthy bodies. That is a good idea and that is why sport receives substantial public subsidies from the Sports Council and from local authorities. Tens of millions of pounds go to subsidise sport.

Since sport receives such substantial subsidies we should expect responsible behaviour. There is an exemplary aspect to the portrayal of sport on television. Much damage is done to sport—to soccer in particular —by the portrayal on television of violence at soccer matches. We all deplore the exhibition of non-sporting behaviour. That is a further indication of how much attention people pay to sport and one of the reasons why the tobacco industry is so committed to being involved in it.

We are talking about an addictive drug and some sports are so hooked on tobacco sponsorship that they will find it difficult to kick the habit. That is why in this sensible and moderate measure the hon. Member for Chislehurst suggests a three-year transition so that sport will not have to go cold turkey by having to do without sponsorship. We support that. Some sports are so dependent on finance from tobacco that it is in the public interest to spend public money to bail them out while they find other sponsors. The evidence is that other sponsors will be relatively easy to find.

Mr. Hayward: What sponsors?

Mr. Dobson: The evidence is that other sponsors have put a lot of money into other activities. Between £110 million and £120 million of sponsorship money goes to sport each year. The tobacco companies' share of that is only about £10 million.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Tobacco companies have an alternative. If the sports people are addicted to such advertising, would not the tobacco companies agree to badges being displayed on players' shirts with the words "I am only doing this for the money. Smoking kills"?

Mr. Dobson: That would certainly be an improvement.

In Nottingham, Bristol, Newcastle and Glasgow thousands of people are employed in the tobacco industry. It would be behaving like the Pharisees for reasonably well paid Members of Parliament or health professionals to say that they were not interested in the future of people employed in the tobacco industry. Those people should not be thrown on the scrap heap or forgotten. If, as a result of a deliberate act of policy, we put their jobs at risk we should be prepared, as an equally deliberate act of Government policy, to find them alternative employment.

Mr. Hayward: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I am sorry, I cannot give way because I want the Minister to reply.

Mr. Hayward: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Opposition spokesman has given way——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. The hon. Member who has the Floor must decide whether to give way and to whom.

Mr. Dobson: The number of people employed in the tobacco industry has fallen in 10 years from about 40,000 to 24,000. That is due partly, as I said, to the drop in sales of cigarettes and equally, if not more so, to increased mechanisation in the industry. Despite all the cries of diversification by the tobacco companies, they did not diversify to create jobs for the people previously working in the industry: they have not shifted them into booze or biscuits. As an act of public policy the Opposition believe that this sort of sponsorship should be stopped and anybody presently employed in the tobacco industry who suffers as a result of a halt in sponsorship should be promptly assisted to find alternative employment. The matter should not be left to market forces.

On behalf of the Opposition I welcome this Bill.

2.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I welcome the opportunity to discuss this important and topical issue. I also welcome the fact that there seems to be a certain amount of cross-Chamber agreement on some of the points. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) is extremely knowledgeable on the subject and he illustrated that in dealing with some apposite interventions by my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor). My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst has played a constant part in this issue for a number of years, not least as the chairman of the all-Party Back Bench ASH supporters group.

It was also helpful to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East (Mr. Knowles) and from the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Pavitt), who probably matches up with my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst. We had some interesting interventions from my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane). I was interested in the speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). He came out positively with the view that his party would ban sponsorship of sport by tobacco companies. The hon. Member was tested by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam on this point when my hon. Friend mentioned the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell).

I remind the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras that the Howell report produced by the committee of inquiry into sports sponsorship, held two or three years ago and chaired by his right hon. Friend the Member for Small Heath, said:

> "The Voluntary Agreement concluded between the Government and the tobacco industry is the right way to regulate sponsorship of sport by tobacco interests. Government, sport and the industry should ensure that the Agreement is properly observed at all times".

We do not dispute that last sentence. The Opposition need to sort themselves out on this point, because the world at large, and especially the sporting world and cities where people work in the tobacco industry, such as those represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, East, will note the views of the Opposition.

Mr. Hayward: Could my hon. Friend speculate on the contribution made by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) and the suggested redundancy of 4,250 people in Bristol? The hon. Member suggested that other jobs should be found for those people. Is it not amazing that the Labour party should be advocating the redundancy of such a large number of people without any clear commitment to alternative employment?

Mr. Tracey: In the House yesterday we heard a few things from the Opposition about public expenditure. No doubt they would incur further liabilities on public expenditure if they were to follow the course put forward by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras.

The Bill calls for a ban on sports sponsorship to be achieved through a phased reduction of expenditure. The Government's view is that the voluntary system of control remains the most effective way of restricting the industry's sponsorship of sport and its possible impact on the public. My Department has negotiated voluntary agreements with the industry which allow tobacco companies to continue to make a contribution to sport and at the same time to protect the public, especially the young, from excesses.

During the past 20 years, the dangers to health associated with smoking have become more apparent, and this has brought increasing pressure for controls on the tobacco industry's advertising and promotion activities. Tobacco advertisements on television were banned in 1965 by a Labour Government, as the hon. Member for Brent, South said. In 1971, the first voluntary agreement on advertising was negotiated between the Conservative Government and tobacco interests. It included a range of voluntary measures intended to discourage smoking. The voluntary agreement on sports sponsorship, which was introduced in 1977 by the Labour Government, with considerable input from the right hon. Member for Small Heath, complemented the agreement on advertising. It restricted the amount of money that tobacco companies could spend in real terms to the level spent by individual companies in 1976. It identified which sports could be sponsored and restricted the size and number of hoardings used for advertising at sporting events, as well as the display of sponsors' names on participants' clothing and equipment.

The present agreement, which was renegotiated in 1982 by my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam, continues to restrict activities in the same way, but also stipulates that the Government health warning should appear on advertisements for sponsored events and on promotional signs at such events. It calls on companies to keep expenditure on media advertising and promotional activities within a reasonable proportion of total expenditure. It specifically limits the amount of promotional material at televised events, and especially prohibits the display of sponsors' names or logos on players' or officials' clothing and equipment. It places controls on which sports can be sponsored, and it calls on companies not to sponsor activities in which the majority of participants are under 18 years of age.

My colleagues in the DHSS are seeking to replace the present advertising agreement, which runs until March this year. Negotiations with the industry are in progress; the

[Mr. Tracey]

details must at this stage be confidential. The sponsorship agreement fell to be reviewed at the end of last year. We have taken advice from the medical profession and other bodies concerned, including the Health Education Council and the Sports Council — both financed by the Government. I am considering seeking some changes to the agreement, bearing in mind the representations that I have received and the negotiations on the advertising agreement. Recently, the Sports Council made its views public when it declared itself against tobacco sponsorship in principle, but at the same time accepted that there is a voluntary agreement with the tobacco industry. It said that, in the review, special consideration should be given to the protection of children. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will agree with that.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): Has my hon. Friend sought the advice of the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the governing bodies in sport?

Mr. Tracey: I am glad to welcome to the Chamber my right hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), who is another of my predecessors. I can answer him in the affirmative. The CCPR has members on the Sports Council and its views have been included in the representations made by the Sports Council. I cannot, of course, be specific about the changes that I shall seek. My negotiations with the industry will be confidential. From the comments I have received, however, it is clear that there is considerable concern about the amount of television exposure that tobacco companies receive through sponsorship. Many people see this as a way round the formal advertising bans and are particularly concerned by studies that have suggested that children believe that tobacco is advertised on television. Of course it is not, and it has not been advertised for 20 years. However, in an opinion poll more than 70 per cent. of children questioned seem to believe that it is.

Although there is a lack of evidence to suggest that children take up smoking as a result of such sponsorship, the Government continue to be concerned about young smokers and will seek to ensure that there is adequate protection from sources through which they might be encouraged to take up the habit. In taking advice on the workings of the present agreement, a number of possible breaches have been pointed out to me. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst referred to the Health Education Council's documents and to other examples which highlight these breaches. I take breaches very seriously and I shall study carefully the material that I have received. This information may provide a major input to my forthcoming negotiations with the industry.

All complaints received are followed through and, if substantiated, resolved quickly with the industry. I do not consider that these instances have been enough to weaken the case for continuing the voluntary system. It has generally worked well in protecting the public, particularly the young, from possible excesses, while allowing the industry to make a contribution to sport. My aim is to ensure that the industry continues to make a contribution, but with necessary restrictions in order to ensure that the public are not encouraged, directly or indirectly, to take up smoking.

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Tracey: I apologise to my hon. Friend for not giving way. I must get on with my speech.

The voluntary system remains the most effective method of restricting and controlling the impact of the tobacco industry's sponsorship of sport. We consider that legislation is not needed. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that the Bill is therefore unnecessary, especially as the industry's expenditure on sports sponsorship, being limited to the 1976 levels, is already decreasing each year as a proportion of all sports sponsorship, which is growing rapidly. Tobacco sponsorship is now below 10 per cent. of all sports sponsorship.

Mr. Proctor: Is my hon. Friend the Minister able to reassure me that he does not believe that the criminal law should prevent a sporting organisation from accepting money from a tobacco company or from any other company that wants to promote that particular sport and that to make this a criminal offence is offensive to most people?

Mr. Tracey: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I have already said that the Government consider that legislation is not needed.

This has been a constructive debate. My aim in securing a new agreement is to ensure that any doubts are eliminated. However, I shall bear in mind all the views that have been raised today. They will be of great value in considering what changes to seek to make to the present sponsorship agreement.

2.27 pm

Mr. Neil Macfarlane (Sutton and Cheam): Conservative Members will have been heartened by the closing remarks of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. It is interesting to find that the Opposition health teams have taken over responsibility for sport and the environment. It has to be contrasted with what happened in previous years. I hope that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) has cleared his speech with his right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell).

Mr. Dobson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Macfarlane: Reading between the lines, the hon. Gentleman seems to be in some difficulty after his speech in Cambridge not so many weeks ago.

I make no apologies for intervening in the debate. I do not intend to defend the tobacco companies. I have no interest to declare, apart from the interests of a number of retailers in my constituency who depend for their trade upon tobacco products. I do not use tobacco products. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) cannot rest easy with the phrases in the Bill:

"To provide for a ban on sponsorship"

and

"The Secretary of State may by Order make provision for the prohibition of expenditure".

Such phrases seem to sit a little oddly on the shoulders of Conservative Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst may have wanted to put across a number of points but he has not set about it in the right way. I believe that alcohol is infinitely more disruptive at sporting events than tobacco.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst said that sports shown late at night on television were purported to

be healthy. My hon. Friend does not carry me with him. I watch snooker and darts late at night and I do not see them as good health-giving products.

Tobacco companies have generated a great deal of influence and interest in sports promotion, not only in Britain but throughout the world, as I have noted time and time again when I have taken trade delegations to countries, especially in the middle east. I do not believe that, in the past 20 or 30 years, there has——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed upon Friday 14 March.

Private Members' Bills

MEDICAL ACT 1983 (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 7 March.

WAGES COUNCIL ORDERS ENFORCEMENT BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Second Reading what day? No day named.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.

Second Reading deferred till Friday 14 March.

TOBACCO SMOKING (PUBLIC PLACES) (NO. 2) BILL

Order for Second Reading read

Hon. Members: Object.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Second Reading what day? No day named.

PREVENTION OF OIL POLLUTION BILL *[LORDS]*

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Moate.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Committee what day?

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): Now, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not usual to have the Committee stage now. The Chair deprecates that procedure.

Mr. Moate: I would not have proceeded had I not thought that it was in accordance with accepted procedures, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understood that this procedure would not be deprecated, but I must obviously bow to your wishes in this matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not the normal practice, but we can take the Committee stage now.

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Bill to be read the Third time upon Friday next.

HIGHWAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Michael Cocks.]*

Committee upon Friday 28 February.

AGRICULTURAL HOLDINGS BILL *[LORDS]*

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Agricultural Holdings Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a Second time. — *[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Thursday 27th February, Mr. Speaker shall put Questions necessary to dispose of the Motions relating to Procedure, Committal of Bills, Public Bills relating exclusively to Scotland, Special Standing Committees, Powers of Chair to propose Question, Majority for Closure, Procedure in Standing Committees, Closure of Debate, Third Reading, Short Speeches, Questions to Members, and Adjournment on Specific and Important Matter that should have Urgent Consideration, and of any Amendments thereto which have been selected by him and which may then be moved, not later than three hours after the first of those Motions has been entered upon. —*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today is private Members' day and I understand that on many occasions the Executive informs private Members if a Bill is to be passed without debate at 2.30, in order to allow Members a chance to object.

Is it a convention of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Executive acting in that capacity on private Members' day, should courteously inform hon. Members what reasons there are for objection? I understand that that is done in most cases, but I should like to know if that is done when notice was given over a year ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That may be the convention, but it is certainly not part of the rules of the House.

Sub-post Offices

2.34 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the problems of the sub-post office network in Great Britain. I am grateful to the Minister for Information Technology, who has come to reply to the debate. I hope that we can take some comfort from the fact that the Minister's responsibilities are primarily to do with new technologies. Perhaps he will have something to say about the application of new technologies to the sub-post office network in Great Britain.

There are in Britain today some 20,000 sub-post offices, a little less than half of which are in towns, and the remainder in rural areas. They comprise an essential part of the social fabric of Britain. They are also a part of our small business network, the network which the Government seek to encourage, since many employ people in their own right. All of them represent the livelihood of at least one family, frequently a couple in middle age who have sunk their life savings into the enterprise.

More importantly, every sub-post office in Britain is an essential part of the community in which it exists. For many, especially the poorer in our society who do not have cars, the local sub-post office is also the local shop upon which they rely for their groceries and essentials.

Sub-post offices are also an essential part of the system of government in Britain. They are responsible, among other things, for 70 per cent. of all Department of Health and Social Security payments. That bald figure does not express their true worth in the welfare system. For many, the local sub-postmaster provides the human face for what is otherwise a cold and insensitive bureaucratic welfare system. As we saw during the Post Office's recent programme to close down some town sub-post offices, many people regard their local sub-post office as an essential element of their community, at least as important and valuable as the local pub, church or school.

The value of sub-post offices in not to be measured just in their contribution to Britain's social fabric. As the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Ronald Dearing, recently admitted to me in a letter commenting on the Post Office's profit last year of £133·7 million—incidentally, up 15 per cent. on the previous year's figure—the contribution made by sub-post offices to the corporation's profits is actually greater than that which derives from the main Crown offices of the Post Office Corporation. In short, the sub-postmaster and the office he runs are not only socially invaluable but also, apparently from the figures which the Post Office has collected, highly efficient.

Yet this invaluable network, this national asset, is now under threat from the Government, like so many of our other national assets. In the last three years, no fewer than 624 sub-post offices have closed and gone out of business. The number of vacancies for sub-postmasters advertised by the Post Office for which no applications have been received has risen by almost 20 per cent. in the last year alone. That is an increase of one fifth in the number of people who do not think it worth while to apply for subpostmaster vacancies.

Clearly, something is wrong. In blunt terms, running a sub-post office has recently become increasingly

difficult and for many downright impossible. Being a sub-postmaster was never an easy job. It requires a degree of social concern, long hours of work, a desire to serve the public and a great deal of commitment. However, the recent changes in the remuneration offered to the sub-postmaster, together with a squeeze on costs and Government threats about the withdrawal of business, are now seriously undermining the economic viability of much of our sub-post office network. For instance, between 1982 and 1985, whilst the work of sub-post offices has increased, according to the Post Office's calculations, by nearly 4 per cent. Sub-postmasters' pay has not even kept pace with the rate of inflation. I shall explain those figures in more detail later.

I shall give a few facts about sub-postmasters' pay and conditions. Sub-postmasters are not employed in the accepted sense of the word. They are contracted by the Post Office to provide a service. They have no right to annual leave, although they receive a limited substitution allowance. They do not receive sick pay, although, again, there are limited substitution provisions. They have no right of access to ACAS in the event of a dispute with the Post Office, such as is now occurring, and no arbitration agreement with the Post Office on matters directly related to pay and conditions.

In addition, sub-postmasters are required to meet the full cost of their premises and staff out of their own pockets. That last point is important, because it accounts for one of the pay anomalies which has allowed the Post Office to pretend that it is providing more remuneration to the sub-postmasters than is the case. The Post Office claims that sub-postmasters have a further income from their private business. That is correct, but such private business as they conduct shares the cost of the premises with the post office section and so saves the corporation money by reducing the costs of its element of that service.

The Post Office lumps together the remuneration for sub-postmasters, the cost of employees and the sub-postmasters' expenses. The result is that, since 1983, sub-postmasters have been subjected to a reduced net pay improvement because they have had to supplement higher expenses. In the latest pay offer, for example, the Post Office claims to be offering a 5·5 per cent. gross improvement. In fact, that amounts to 4·5 per cent. in the sub-postmaster's pocket because of the inclusion of expenses in the overall sum. It is 4·5 per cent., when inflation was running a full percentage point higher last year, at 5·7 per cent. Once again, it is the sub-postmaster who ends up paying out of his own pocket to cover expenses which should properly be incurred by the Post Office.

That all adds up to the fact that many sub-postmasters find it impossible to survive. I shall quote the example of a sub-postmistress in my constituency. She receives gross pay of £410 per month. That is a great deal of money, but after she has paid her expenses she is left with £300 per month for a 44-hour week, which does not include the substantial extra hours that she has to spend on paperwork. Her hourly rate is thus substantially less than that of the cleaner she must employ to keep her premises in order.

I recently asked the chairman of the Post Office, Sir Ronald Dearing, to give me the figures for remuneration paid to sub-postmasters over the past three years. On the face of it, the figures that he supplied showed an 18 per cent pay increase. However, that figure does not take account of the £60 million of additional business done by the sub-postmasters in 1984-85 as a result of the DHSS dispute.

As sub-postmasters are paid strictly according to the work they do, that sum must be accounted for separately, leaving a real increase over the three years of 16·22 per cent.—a full 3 per cent. below the prevailing rate of inflation, which measured 19·3 per cent. over the same period.

All that is happening at a time when sub-postmasters' work has increased overall by nearly 4 per cent., leaving individuals almost 7 per cent. below what they should have received merely to stand still over the same period.

That brings us to the position as it stands this year. The National Federation of Sub-Postmasters—the recognised body in these matters—has refused to accept the current offer on the grounds that I have explained. The Post Office is now free to, and probably will, impose that agreement on the sub-postmasters. There is no action no arbitration; sub-postmasters can do nothing—they can either like it or lump it. I have no doubt that the majority of them will accept it. It will place even further burdens upon them and undermine further their economic capacity to survive. It will threaten once again the overall integrity of a vital network.

At the same time, the Post Office has also imposed new conditions for pay review. As part of the last remuneration agreement, a new system of reviews of work was instituted —or rather, required. This system requires annual rather than triennial checks of work. Many sub-postmasters find this unfair. For nearly 80 years, while the volume of business has been steadily increasing through the sub-post offices, the Post Office has been content to have triennial reviews, taking advantage of the fact that the sub-postmaster remained largely unrewarded for increases in work in the periods in between. The future business of the sub-post office network will drop because of the withdrawal of Government work. The Post Office insists on having the opportunity to cut pay as frequently as possible.

Sub-postmasters face yet another threat. The Public Accounts Committee recently recommended that pensioners and others should be offered an inducement, possibly as much as £50, to go over to the automatic credit transfer system for the payment of their welfare and pension benefits. Thus, welfare payments will bypass the sub-post office and go straight into the banks—for those lucky enough to have a bank account.

If the Government decide to implement this bribe—I call it a bribe advisedly — it will have the most devastating effect on the whole sub-post office network. It will endanger the viability of literally thousands of sub-post offices, leaving those who do not have bank accounts without a local office from which to receive their benefits. No doubt, in cold economic terms, some money will be saved for the Government, but the cost will be more than paid for by those who are among the most disadvantaged in our society and who rely on the sub-post offices as a source for their shopping, as a point of human contact and as an essential ingredient in their own community.

This amounts to a serious attack on a vital part of Britain's social fabric. If the sub-post office network is further reduced, the number of our small retail outlets, already in serious decline, will be drastically reduced; the quality of life in many communities, especially the isolated ones, will be further diminished; the livelihood of

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

several thousand small businesses will be seriously endangered; an important and efficient contributor to the Post Offices profits will be threatened, and an important element of the British way of life in our towns and villages will be diminished.

I hope the Government will recognise the importance of what is at stake. I hope they will make it clear to the Post Office that they regard the sub-post office network as an important national asset which should not be further reduced. I hope the Minister for Information Technology will agree with me that, whatever the reasons for the Government placing a financial squeeze on the Post Office through increased external financing limits, the pressures that this creates should not simply be passed down the line for the sub-postmaster to carry. I hope that he will take this opportunity to state clearly that the Government recognises that the bribe proposed by the PAC would do terrible damage to the sub-post office network. I hope that he will, finally, make it clear that the sub-postmaster should be appropriately rewarded in this year's pay negotiations.

What we need is a positive policy to retain our vital sub-post office network. At the very least, this must include a requirement on the Post Office to make good the deficiencies in sub-postmasters' pay, rather than seeking to use their muscle to impose another inadequate pay deal on those who have served the Post Office and our society so well.

2.48 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): I am pleased to be able to reply to this debate and I welcome the opportunity to reassure the House, and the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) in particular, about the Government's policy towards the sub-post office network. I am sure that he can distinguish between matters properly within the purview of the Government and matters belonging to the Post Office in its capacity as a manager.

I can well understand that the combination of a number of developments in recent years has given rise to concern among many sub-postmasters about their future in the counters business. The developments are first the urban closure programme, secondly the advent of changes in the method of paying social security benefits, and thirdly the Post Office's current intention to move to annual revision of sub-postmasters' remuneration. I recognise the understandable fears of sub-postmasters about the implications of those developments, and I want to take this opportunity to reassure them that the Government appreciate their concern, and to explain why it is important to keep the developments in perspective.

First, the House will recollect that the urban closure programme was debated at length in January last year. For that reason I do not propose to take time this afternoon to go over the same ground again. Suffice it to say that the Post Office was implementing a programme to reduce the size of the urban network by closing offices that were in excess of the long-standing criterion of providing offices at intervals of not less than a mile in towns. The programme was decided on for good commercial reasons, and the Government were satisfied that the proposed closures were not inconsistent with our commitment to the maintenance of an adequate post office network, or with the Post Office's statutory duty to have regard both to economy, efficiency and the social needs of the United Kingdom.

Although the debate last year was focused on the urban network, the hon. Gentleman took an active part in it, and he may recall the comments that I made on that occasion about rural post offices. In particular, I explained that the Post Office did not have any plans to reduce the size of the rural network. That is not to say that some rural post offices do not close, and will not close in the future. I understand that there is a net loss of between 80 and 90 rural offices each year because, although new offices may open in rural areas, their number is exceeded by cases where a sub-postmaster retires or resigns and the Post Office cannot find a suitable replacement to take on the office. That has been the position for many years, and I have no reason to suppose that it will not continue.

The Post Office is well aware of the impact that the loss of a village sub-post office can have on rural communities, and is always ready to consider the possibility of arrangements to retain a post office facility in a village, albeit on a limited basis. The scope for doing so increased last year when, as part of its efforts to preserve the rural network, the Post Office agreed with the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters that some post offices could move to part-time opening.

The second development in recent years which I believe has given sub-postmasters a sense of concern has been the advent of changes in the payment of social security benefits. These included the option for people to have their benefits paid direct into their bank or building society account by automated credit transfer, or ACT, rather than collect them every week at their local post office. More recently, concern has been aroused by the suggestion that inducements should be offered to people to switch to ACT. Indeed, I regret that, whether by accident or design, the position with regard to the payment of social security payments by automated credit transfer seems to be the subject of rather widespread misapprehension. To judge from letters that I have received that topic has prompted undue and unnecessary concern among many subpost-masters and their customers. To the extent that that is the result of genuine misunderstanding, it is unfortunate. But in a small number of cases it seems to me likely that pensioners and others using sub-post offices have been deliberately misinformed and caused to worry quite unnecessarily. If that has indeed been the case, it is most irresponsible. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity today to make the position clear.

As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the origin of the matter is the scrutiny that a team, reporting to my noble Friend Lord Rayner, then Sir Derek Rayner, undertook in 1979 on the arrangements for paying social security benefits. The scrutiny team recommended, among other things, the introduction of direct crediting and a reduction in the frequency of benefit payments. Those measures, together with the simplification of administration, were forecast to produce significant savings in DHSS costs.

The Social Services Select Committee substantially endorsed the recommendations, with some modifications. Following careful consideration of their implications, and after widespread consultation, the Government accepted the modified proposals, but with some important changes. In particular, the Government considered the impact of changes in payment arrangements on the Post Office network and on beneficiaries. It should be noted that the

Government did not take up the Committee's recommendation that, as an incentive for beneficiaries to move to direct crediting, benefit payments should be paid two weeks in advance and two weeks in arrears.

In May 1981, my right hon. Friend, the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), the then Secretary of State for Social Services, announced that the Government had decided that most beneficiaries should have the option—I stress that this was an option, with no element of compulsion—to have their benefits paid direct into bank or other accounts. He also announced that it was the Government's intention to move to a position where, for mothers claiming child benefit for the first time, four-weekly payment would be the norm. Mothers already receiving child benefit would have the choice of switching to four-weekly rather than weekly payment.

It was recognised that those changes would lead to a fall in Department of Health and Social Security business over post office counters, but it was forecast that this would be more than compensated for by additional business from new and existing customers. It was also recognised that within this overall picture there would be variations and in order to provide a further safeguard it was announced that the Government would make available up to £2 million over five years to help smaller sub-post offices adversely affected if the new business did not grow at the same rate as DHSS business reduced. Following discussions with the Post Office and the National Federation of Sub-postmasters, agreement on the details of the fund was announced in May 1983.

It might be noted that, so far, payments from the fund have been far less than were expected. In part this reflects the effects of the industrial dispute at the DHSS computer centre in Newcastle in 1984 but in large measure it reflects the upward trend in the volume of counters business since the announcement in May 1981.

The forecasts of new business included the effect of provisions that were subsequently enacted in the British Telecommunications Act 1981 enabling the Post Office to provide counter services for a wider range of public sector customers. Within these provisions the Post Office has been able to win a range of business including the sale of bus and train tickets and cards, which has contributed to an overall increase in the volume of counters business since 1981. For example there was an increase of 3·5 per cent. in 1984-85.

A further factor has been the lower than expected take-up of the option of payment by ACT with, as a consequence, lower than forecast savings in DHSS costs. This point was noted in a report that the Comptroller and Auditor-General prepared and published in February last year, following an investigation by the National Audit Office. The report was subsequently considered by the Public Accounts Committee which, after examining the DHSS, published its conclusions and recommendations last June in its 20th report in the 1984-85 Session.

Among its recommendations, the Committee expressed its surprise that, when the shortfall in expected savings became apparent, the DHSS did not give fresh consideration to offering direct financial inducements. The Committee recommended that early consideration be given to targeting inducements towards those most likely to be receptive to the idea. I should stress that this is a recommendation made by the PAC, not a decision made by the Government. The Committee also welcomed a survey being undertaken by the DHSS of public attitudes towards methods and frequency of payment of benefits.

Together with a number of other reports from the PAC the 20th report was debated in the House on 24 October. This was shortly after the Government had published their response to the report in a Treasury minute in which we noted that the DHSS would give further consideration to the issue of inducements to accept payments by ACT in the light of the survey of public attitudes.

In response to representations we have received about the PAC's recommendations on inducements, both I and my colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry and the DHSS have made it clear that any consideration of the way in which benefits are to be paid will have regard to the effect that any changes will have on the post office network. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) gave the hon. Gentleman that assurance when he wrote to him last September and I am happy to repeat it today.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services is therefore considering the PAC's recommendations in the light of the outcome of the survey of public attitudes and the representations that have been received on this matter. I understand that my right hon. Friend is hoping to make an announcement on this subject shortly.

Although I cannot anticipate that announcement, I want to emphasise that the Government have always made it clear that payment by ACT is an option that is open to people to choose freely, without compulsion or coercion. We have no intention of depriving pensioners and others of the option to continue to collect their payments in cash from the local post office. We recognise that for many people, even those who have bank accounts, the weekly visit to the post office can be both an incentive to get out of the house and a valued social occasion.

Mr. Ashdown: I am grateful for those reassuring words. I may want to intervene again, so I will try to be brief. The Minister accused certain elements of irresponsibility. I think he must recognise that if there were to be a bribe, of whatever sum—if it is as high as £50 it makes the matter worse — it would have a devastating effect. If the Government are going through the process of making up their minds, bearing in mind the considerations the Minister has mentioned, I am sure that he must realise that those who have the best interests of the sub-post office network at heart will naturally want to mobilise public opinion to impress that fact upon the Government. That is in no sense irresponsible. It seems to me to be very responsible in the best interests of the network.

Mr. Pattie: I shall move to the third development which has, in my view, given rise to concern among sub-postmasters. This debate is on a very important subject and we have limited time so I shall press on.

I want to deal with the frequency with which sub-postmasters' remuneration is assessed. That is, of course, a matter between the Post Office and the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, and the Government are not directly involved. But, given the importance that the Post Office attaches to this issue the Post Office chairman felt that I should be aware of the background and it may be helpful to the House if I describe this as he has explained it to me. The Post Office has, since last April,

[Mr. Pattie]

been involved in negotiations with the National Federation of Sub-postmasters on the sub-postmasters' 1985 pay settlement. However, the main point at issue has not been directly one of pay, although it is related to pay. The pay offer itself that the Post Office made was in line with settlements the Post Office has secured with other pay groups within the corporation.

The issue in dispute is the frequency with which individual remuneration levels are assessed. A sub-postmaster is not an employee but an agent of the Post Office, engaged on a contract for services, and his remuneration is governed by the amount of business transacted at his office. Under the system currently in force — which dates back to 1908 — each office's business levels and hence remuneration are re-assessed every three years. If the new level of business is higher than the old, at least 12 months' arrears are paid to the sub-postmaster when his remuneration is increased, but there is no similar retrospective device for the Post Office if business declines. In addition, sub-postmasters have the opportunity to call for a special upward revision of their remuneration between triennial revisions if they feel that their business has increased by more than a small amount. But there is no similar opportunity for the Post Office to seek a reciprocal reduction when work falls.

The Post Office has therefore required, as part of the 1985 pay settlement, a change to a system of annual revisions. Although I understand that both sides have worked hard to try to reach a negotiated settlement there is no prospect of agreement on the sticking point of a change to annual revision. The Post Office has therefore informed the federation that it will introduce annual revision from next September and is now taking the measures necessary to put this into effect. I understand that the federation has reluctantly noted the position. The Post Office chairman has told me that compensation for the change of, on average, £90 will be paid to sub-postmasters.

Earlier in my speech I referred to the £2 million fund which was set up in 1983. I would like to tell the House that Mr. Alban Morgan, the general secretary of the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, has been in touch with my officials to inquire whether there is any possibility of extending the life of the fund beyond its present closing date of 30 April 1987. Mr. Morgan has been told that the Government would be willing to consider any proposals which the federation might wish to put to us. I am happy to have the opportunity today to confirm this.

The hon. Gentleman has rightly drawn attention to the importance of the sub-post office network in this country.

Mr. Ashdown *rose—*

Mr. Pattie: We are about to conclude and I would like to summarise.

There should be no doubt about the Government's recognition and appreciation of the important and valuable role that sub-post offices play in the communities they serve. This is true of the local post office in the town. In rural areas the village post office very often plays a key role in the quality of village life, and the Government wholeheartedly support the efforts the Post Office is making to arrest the erosion of the rural network. Indeed, the £2 million fund for sub-postmasters was tangible evidence of our genuine concern about the network, in particular the smaller sub-offices, many of which are of course in rural areas.

But the detailed operation of the counters business is the responsibility of the Post Office board and counter management—not the Government—and this includes negotiations with sub-postmasters on their remuneration and conditions. However, it remains the Government's policy to encourage and support the counters business in its efforts to increas the efficiency and effectiveness of its operations. It is through success in those efforts that the business can achieve success in the market place to ensure its long-term viability and preservation of the rural network.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at four minutes past Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 24 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

FELIXSTOWE DOCK AND RAILWAY BILL

Ordered,

That the Committee on the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill have leave to visit and inspect the site of the proposed works, provided that no evidence shall be taken in the course of such visit and that any party who has made an Appearance before the Committee be permitted to attend by his Counsel, Agent or other representative. — *[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Flightpaths (Developments)

1. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans to seek to extend his powers to control or influence major developments of public or private buildings under existing flightpaths.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Michael Spicer): No, Sir. The consideration of planning applications is a matter for local planning authorities, although with certain proposals for developments near to an airport or affecting aircraft using it planning authorities are bound to consult the airport authority and either the Civil Aviation Authority or the Ministry of Defence.

Mr. Stern: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. Is he aware that whereas, in general, the planning authority has powers to prohibit the extension of a flight path over existing development, his powers to comment on a development or concentration of people under a flight path are rather more limited, and that that causes considerable anxiety, especially in my constituency, where the Filton airfield provides more than 10,000 jobs? In view of proposed developments in that and many other areas, will he seek to extend his powers?

Mr. Spicer: I understand my hon. Friend's anxiety over this and a number of related issues. Planning authorities must consult the CAA about safety considerations before they make their decisions. In the context that my hon. Friend mentioned, the Secretary of State for the Environment advises about noise considerations, and he has discretion to call in the applications.

Dartford Tunnel

2. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce a decision on future plans for the Darford tunnel complex.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): We shall issue the invitation to promoters to make proposals for a third crossing at Dartford later this week.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Minister aware that it is now seven months since the Secretary of State first suggested the involvement of private enterprise in the building of the third Dartford tunnel, and that only now do we have some idea of the time scale involved? Does he accept that the completion of every new section of the M25 increases the risk of Dartford becoming Britain's biggest bottleneck? Why does the Department of Transport not show the same sense of urgency over the Dartford tunnel as it did over the Channel tunnel?

Mr. Mitchell: This is a new idea and it requires careful assessment before we start inviting the private sector to put proposals to us. As to the bottleneck, I understand that congestion at Dartford is not likely to become serious before 1991-92.

Mr. Higgins: Is my hon. Friend aware that congestion on the M25 has already become considerable and presents a problem? When he studies possible proposals for a new tunnel, will he consider the fact that, sooner or later, we are likely to need to make the M25 four lanes in each direction rather than three?

Mr. Mitchell: I listened carefully to what my right hon. Friend said, and we shall keep it in mind.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am interested to hear that the Minister is leaving traffic congestion problems for the next Labour Government, but in the meantime, will the third Dartford tunnel have any impact on his plans for the east London river crossing?

Mr. Mitchell: On the first point, we have no intention of waiting until the end of the century before that is put in hand. We shall of course take his second point into account.

Mr. Squire: I endorse what the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) said about urgency. Has my hon. Friend come to any preliminary conclusions about the advantages of a private tunnel versus a possible tunnel from the joint councils?

Mr. Mitchell: When my hon. Friend sees the invitation to promoters he will find that there are opportunities for people to quote both ways, and we shall look with great interest at what is the best value for money.

Rushden and Higham Ferrers Bypass

3. **Mr. Fry** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his latest estimate for the commencement date for the A6 bypass of Rushden and Higham Ferrers in Northamptonshire.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): Subject to the clearance of the statutory procedures, and provided that the resources are available, construction could begin during 1990.

Mr. Fry: Is my hon. Friend aware that a possible route for the bypass has been in existence for many years and so there is likely to be the minimum amount of opposition to it? What is required is the will and the money to build it, and in those circumstances can my hon. Friend make any improvement on the date that he has given me?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall do what I can. The scheme has always been in the reserve list at the end of the roads programme. We now have a good prospect of a start in 1990.

Mr. William Powell: May I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr. Fry) said? The delay in providing the bypass is having extremely bad effects upon my constituents in the parish of Stanwick, through which traffic is being diverted simply because the existing facilities through Higham Ferrers and Rushden are so crowded. Any improvement in the date will be welcomed by my constituents.

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is clear that any improvements that we can make in the roads programme will generally be welcomed by people in the locality.

Bus Lanes (London)

4. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the operation of bus lanes on trunk roads in London following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As with all forms of traffic management on national roads, I shall want to satisfy myself as to their effects.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that bus lanes in London have proved an excellent way of speeding up bus services and so improving the efficiency of London transport? Will the hon. Gentleman have a look at the bus lane in Park Lane in the morning rush hour? It is being made a nonsense of because buses and vans are using it for parking. Unless parking is abolished in bus lanes, buses cannot benefit from them.

Mr. Bottomley: I shall do as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

Mr. Greenway: Do not bus lanes in London produce the most ghastly chaos and delay motorists and bus passengers getting to work? Is my hon. Friend satisfied that some of the bus lanes recently introduced by the GLC have been not for traffic reasons but for spiteful, silly reasons?

Mr. Bottomley: All hon. Members will benefit from the review of the bus lane assessment criteria and performance, being carried out for the Department and London Regional Transport.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is not whingeing by Tory Members about bus lanes most inappropriate, since bus lanes generally speed up buses and are for the advantage of bus-travelling members of the public in London? Will he ensure that when the GLC is abolished and borough councils and his Department are looking at bus lanes, they will take first into consideration the convenience of the travelling public, and not that of the Right-wing fanaticism of his Back Benchers?

Mr. Bottomley: Proper expressions of concern from my hon. Friends behind me are sometimes preferable to the witterings of Labour Members.

Mr. Ward: When my hon. Friend looks at the review of bus lanes, he may consider that many of them should go the way that the GLC is rightly going, and disappear. If he gets around to looking at bus lanes in Park Lane, will he consider that that is probably the most crazy system of all, because buses occupy two lanes on one of the most highly-used roads in London?

Mr. Bottomley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is clear that one of the most popular things that I can do, given the expressions of interest on both sides of the House, is to visit Park Lane in the morning and see it for myself.

Oil Tankers (Sea Routes)

6. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further consideration he has given to the designation of sea routes for large crude oil carrying tankers west of the Hebrides and clear of the Minch; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Surveys carried out under the Government's civil hydrography programme have confirmed that there is a route of sufficient depth for deep draught vessels to the west of the outer Hebrides. The surveys were completed last autumn, and relevant charts have been updated to show the area surveyed and to make it clear that it is suitable for deep-draught vessels.

Mr. Kennedy: I thank the Secretary of State for that reply and for the written answers that I received last year from his hon. Friend the Minister of State. Will the Secretary of State clarify whether he enjoys the power to make those routes statutory, or is his power simply advisory? Concern has been expressed that the Government do not have the statutory power to enforce rerouting outwith the Minch and west of the Hebrides. There is evidence that the French Government, in the wake of the Amoco Cadiz catastrophe, were able to take such power. What is the Government's position?

Mr. Ridley: I am advised that I do not have powers to close a route to traffic, so I cannot do more than advise traffic as to the preferable route. Obviously I cannot answer for the French Government. They may have different powers. We are dealing with international traffic, so the question of powers does not seem to me to be one that we should raise at this time.

Aviation (Liberalisation)

7. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with British airlines about the liberalisation of aviation.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We regularly seek the advice of British airlines in negotiating for more liberal aviation agreements. We have made notable progress in Europe, with liberal agreements with five other countries, and are pushing hard this year for real progress in the EC.

Mr. Hind: Does my hon. Friend agree that cheap air travel cannot come quickly enough? Will he take every possible step to liberalise the cost of flying in Europe?

[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] I am not reading. One cannot even look down these days. Does my hon. Friend agree that the sooner the EEC and our European allies come to terms with free and non-protective flights between European nations the better that it will be for the consumer, especially the British consumer?

Mr. Spicer: As a direct result of the new air service agreements that we have signed with several European countries, cheaper air fares and many more services are being introduced. I am confident that during the coming year more British airlines will fly those routes and that as a result the quality of service will rise and air fares will fall.

Mr. Evans: What is the difference between liberalisation and complete deregulation of aviation? Has the Department of Transport considered what has happened in the United States, where complete deregulation has meant several aviation companies tottering on the brink of bankruptcy? Will he confirm that he does not intend to go down that track?

Mr. Spicer: There is no proposal on the table in Europe or in the mind of the Government for complete deregulation. Obviously the Government will be involved on a bilateral or a multilateral basis. We wish to make it easier for competition to exist, in the interests of passengers.

Mr. McCrindle: From his discussions with British Airways and Al Italia, is my hon. Friend satisfied that no barriers are being placed in the way of the proposed additional service to Milan from Gatwick, in conformity with the Government's policy of dual designation by British airlines to European destinations?

Mr. Spicer: I am not satisfied that the Italian Government understand, as we understand, that the Treaty of Rome should apply to aviation matters as it applies to other matters, and that there should be far greater competition and multidesignation of airlines on that route and on other routes into Italy.

Mr. Ron Davies: Does the Minister accept that price considerations must always be secondary to safety? In the discussions that he and his Department are having, what consideration is being given to safety standards?

Mr. Spicer: Safety standards are the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority. My Department supports the Civil Aviation Authority in precisely the way that the hon. Gentleman implies.

Mr. Soames: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the fine work done by him and his Department. Anyone working in the aviation industry is grateful for the progress that he has made, but does he agree that there is much more to be done? Will he assure the House that he will continue to press, especially within Europe, for further and dramatic liberalisation?

Mr. Spicer: I thank my hon. Friend warmly for his kind remarks. I agree completely that there is much to be done to reduce fares and to establish the rules of competition, so that our formidable airline industry can succeed in Europe, as it is succeeding in other parts of the world, to the benefit of passengers throughout Europe.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Is it not the case that in 1984 the Secretary of State rejected the Civil Aviation Authority's competition policy because he wanted to protect the value of British Airways for privatisation? Is this sudden new-found enthusiasm for competition today a recognition that the value of BA has fallen by half and that the Government cannot sell it with a proper competition policy?

Mr. Spicer: I hope that that question means that the Opposition, led by the hon. Gentleman, will now fight for more competition. If that is true, it is to be welcomed. The arrangements that my right hon. Friend made last year, whereby British Caledonian could take over some substantial routes into Saudi Arabia in exchange for some not-so-substantial routes to South America, were a move towards further competition, and go against what the hon. Gentleman implied in his question.

Road Humps

8. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the proposed draft amendments to the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1983 to be put before the House.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As soon as possible.

Mr. Bowden: Will my hon. Friend take note of the anxiety felt by many of my constituents, especially those who live in Court lane, Dulwich where the delay in implementing the regulations has meant that many serious accidents have taken place and that the residents are in fear of life and limb because of the speed of traffic on that road? I am delighted that the regulations will be implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Bottomley: I have seen the correspondence that my hon. Friend had with my predecessor, and I am aware of the leading role played by Mr. Sholem. Road humps are not the only way to reduce vehicle speeds. It is well worth while for local authorities to look at other ways of reducing the danger that clearly exists.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given that consultation was originally due to take place last autumn with the amended regulations being laid before the House in the early part of 1986, will the Minister give an assurance that consultation will start within a matter of days, and that the regulations will be laid before the end of the spring? It is not only in Southwark, which the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) and I represent, that the amendment of these regulations will be greatly beneficial. I am sure that the Minister will support them. Will he ensure that his Department moves quickly?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman gets it slightly wrong, because when we are dealing with complex and controversial subjects it may be better to take weeks rather than days. If I can begin consultation by Easter, it will be possible to lay the regulations before the House by the summer.

Mr. Gregory: Will my hon. Friend pursue the possibility of issuing a circular to local authorities to encourage the greater use of speed humps, which in medieval cities such as York would certainly stop heavy vehicles from making short cuts through residential areas and avoiding the proper routes?

Mr. Bottomley: I shall give the consideration that my hon. Friend requests, but humps are not the only way and are not always the most satisfactory way of reducing excessive speed.

Channel Tunnel

9. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet made any estimate of the number of jobs that will be created in the north-east as a result of building the Channel fixed link; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have made no such estimate. CTG-FM intends to invite bids for the supply of equipment from companies throughout the United Kingdom. It has indentified approximatedly 3,500 man-years of work for which companies in the north-east, Yorkshire and Humberside are well placed to compete successfully. In addition, British Rail's investment of up to £390 million is likely to benefit companies in the north and midlands.

Mr. Boyes: On 20 January the Secretary of State said that he would

"consider carefully the employment consequences of the development."—[*Official Report*, 20 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 20.]

Once again he is giving me no assurances for the people of the north-east that the Channel tunnel will create jobs. We know full well that it will make matters even worse for the region with the highest unemployment. It is nothing more than a massive drain on vitally needed cash that should be invested in the nort-east to create jobs for the people there so that the economy there can begin to thrive again — something that it will never do while this Government are in power.

Mr. Mitchell: First, there will not be a drain on jobs anywhere in the country. Much of the money is coming from abroad and would not be invested here if it were not for the project, which is in the private sector. Secondly, jobs will be awarded not on a Buggins' turn basis, but substantially to those who win them because they are competitive. That includes a large number of firms north of Watford.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend will be aware that north-east Kent has higher unemployment levels than those in some parts of the north-east of England. Following his reply in the debate on the White Paper, is my hon. Friend able to comment further on whether his Department has plans to publish a prospectus for north-east and east Kent, along the lines of that published by the French Government on behalf of the north Pas de Calais?

Mr. Mitchell: I am conscious of the number of unemployed in east Kent. The committee that I shall chair will consider that aspect to see how best to ensure that the development provides them with jobs.

Mr. Leadbitter: Is the Minister prepared to initiate discussions with the regional CBI, the trade unions, the major industrialists and the ports in connection with the effect on the region's economy of the building of the link? If he is not prepared to take the initiative, will he respond favourably to an invitation from these bodies to discuss the important matter of the economy of the region?

Mr. Mitchell: I am always prepared to respond to an invitation to discuss the matter. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will bring a deputation to see me.

Mr. Holt: Is my hon. Friend aware that I have had communications from the business community in Cleveland, including one from the Tees and Hartlepool port authority, welcoming the Government's decision to go ahead with the Channel tunnel and recognising that, with its good labour force, the opportunities in the north-east will be taken up, which will expand the economy in that area?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sure that my hon. Friend reflects the spirit of those in the north-east who are determined to be successful and secure jobs and orders.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman consider the experience of the development of North sea oil, and recollect that in the early stages most orders went abroad and that only after the establishment of the Offshore Supplies Office, chaired by a Minister at the Department of Energy did 71 per cent. of contracts over £100,000 come to Britain? Will he immediately set up such an office to make sure that we get the maximum benefit from the British end of the construction costs?

Mr. Mitchell: No. I am confident the British industry is well-equipped to keep a substantial share of the business that is available and, without any duck shoving, it is much more competitive that the hon. Gentleman imagines.

Safety Cones

10. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the implications for traffic flows on motorways and major trunk roads undergoing repairs and maintenance of the numbers and location of safety cones, especially at weekends; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Traffic management arrangements at roadworks sites are designed to allow vehicles to pass safely through the works with as little delay as possible. We monitor the arrangements and revise our standard layouts when improvements are identified.

Mr. Dykes: As there is nothing more infuriating for hard-pressed motorists—who see too much congestion nowadays anyway, including on motorways—will my right hon. Friend reassure the House and the public, after all the discussion in the House last summer, that the excessive deployment of cones in lanes that are not being worked on, particularly at weekends, is now a thing of the past? There is still much mail about this subject, and people are fed up with it.

Mr. Ridley: There are reasons why sometimes there are some cones with no visible work. Concrete may be setting, it may be too cold for asphalt laying, the cones may have been set up for work to start shortly, or work may be taking place underneath the structures. Equally, on many occasions cones are there for no good purpose. I wish that agent authorities would apply the same spirit of urgency to moving cones as I do to getting the contracts done by applying the lane rental system, which has saved up to 25 per cent. of the time of the works.

Mr. Snape: Are we not the only developed country that is happy to have miles of cones for yards of work—particularly at weekends as the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) said — or for no work? Will the Secretary of State look at other parts of the world—he can have a long trip if he likes—to see how they do it? Does this happen because much of the coning is carried out by a private company, which perhaps can charge so much per cone and use as many as possible?

Mr. Ridley: No, Sir. Coning is carried out by agent authorities, which are usually the county councils. I have already reminded them, and I shall do so again, that they should not leave cones in place for a minute longer than is necessary. Our system of lane rental, whereby a contractor is paid a bonus if he finishes the contract early, has reduced the time by 25 per cent. in many cases. It is the envy of the world. I am afraid that I shall not have time to go round the world, because so many foreigners are coming here to see what we are doing.

Mr. Higgins: Given the success of that incentive scheme, will my right hon. Friend consider imposing penalties on agencies that leave the cones in place unnecessarily?

Mr. Ridley: I have looked at that very point, but it is very difficult to think of a legal way of imposing a penalty on one's agent.

Stansted Airport

11. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has held with the British Airports Authority about disposal of land in the safeguard area around Stansted airport.

Mr. Spicer: I expect to be able to announce within the next week or so the details of the new area of safeguarded land at Stansted. The British Airports Authority will then dispose of land outside that area.

Mr. Haselhurst: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the purpose of safeguarding, in the first place, an area of land amounting to 2,500 acres was against the possibility of a second runway? As my right hon. Friend has said emphatically that there will not be a second runway at Stansted, what is the difficulty about determining the exact amount of land of which to dispose?

Mr. Spicer: I can confirm that the reason for the disposal of this land is that there will not be a second runway. I understand that certain legal difficulties have led to the delay, but they have been overcome and I expect shortly to be able to make the announcement for which my hon. Friend is looking.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Will my hon. Friend describe the difference between the new area of which he is prepared to dispose and the area which was previously designated under inquiry by the Eyre report?

Mr. Spicer: As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said, that land is no longer needed for a second runway. There is nothing new about this. It was proposed in the White Paper.

Coaches (Tachographs)

12. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce measures to enable tachographs fitted to coaches to be used for on-the-spot speed checks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is for chief officers of police to decide what evidence is needed to support prosecutions for speeding. The proposed requirement to fit coaches with speed governors will greatly help compliance with speed limits.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my hon. Friend aware that tachographs are used on the continent to enforce speed restrictions and that it is a cheap and effective system? Does he agree that such a system is preferable to his proposal, which will force small bus operators to fit these new-fangled speed governors — a burden which they could well do without?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will be aware that the laws in this country are different from the laws in the rest of Europe. It is for the police to decide what evidence to bring and what resources should be deployed. Speed governors tackle the problem more directly and are a more certain way of ensuring compliance. Prevention is better than cure.

Mr. Stephen Ross: The Minister has mentioned twice the fitting of speed governors, which already exist on coaches on the Oxford Link service. What time scale does he envisage before this becomes a legal requirement?

Mr. Bottomley: I am not yet certain.

Mr. Lyell: Will my hon. Friend think again about the use of tachographs? They are extremely effective in preventing accidents. I have seen them in operation when travelling on coaches throughout Europe. They have much to recommend them.

Mr. Bottomley: I shall give further consideration to my hon. and learned Friend's suggestion.

Mr. Evans: In view of the widespread concern in the country about the speed at which certain coaches travel on motorways—all hon. Members have seen coaches flying past them at 70, 80 or 90 mph—why does the Minister not instruct the police regularly to inspect the tachographs? The introduction of the governor will cause problems for some vehicles that are forced to speed to escape from a possible traffic hazard.

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman will want to know that the Department has analysed about 80,000 tachograph charts in the last 12 months.

Road Accidents

14. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will state the number of people killed on the roads in the years 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Bottomley: The number of people killed in road accidents in Great Britain between 1982 and 1984 is as follows: In 1982 5,934; in 1983 5,445; in 1984 5,599. Final statistics for 1985 are not yet available.

In the first nine months of 1985 road accident deaths were 10 per cent. lower than in the first nine months of 1984. If this trend is continued through the fourth quarter of 1985 the number of road accident deaths in 1985 will be the lowest recorded since 1954.

Mr. Dormand: If that number of people were killed in aircraft crashes each year, would not the Government take more effective action to reduce the slaughter? Will the Minister consider introducing legislation to provide for an automatic prison sentence for those convicted of drunken driving?

Mr. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman expresses the widespread concern about the appalling slaughter on our roads. It is worth giving a pat on the back to those who have contributed to reductions in the numbers of accidents,

especially because of the increase in the use of our roads. We must think of all possible ways of getting through to drivers, especially at local level, the initiatives that can be taken to maintain the downward trend.

Mr. Chapman: Does my hon. Friend's Department keep a record, not only of the number of vehicles using our roads, but of the frequency with which they use our roads? Would it not be a good idea to measure that against the number of road accidents to discover the efficiency of road safety measures and to assess the need for new roads and bypasses, which might bring down the figure further?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes. Road design might make a significant reduction in the consequences of driver behaviour, but driver behaviour itself makes the greatest contribution to accidents, serious injuries and deaths on the road. We must put out that message, especially at local level, because that is where people misbehave.

Mr. Snape: May we have the equivalent figures for railway passengers killed in the past four years? Does the Minister agree that it would make more sense, and be safer, if the Government encouraged the greater use of public transport, especially railways?

Mr. Bottomley: The figures are available. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that everyone should move from the roads to the railways, he will find that the democracy of transport moves in a way different from that which he expects.

M25 (Lighting)

15. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has received any representations in favour of lighting all remaining sections of the M25; and what offers he has received from lighting companies about lighting the motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We have received a number of representations, including a press release with a covering letter from a lighting manufacturer.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is my hon. Friend aware that 26 people have lost their lives on the M25 since it was opened? Is he further aware that a number of companies such as Philips are showing interest in taking over lighting on the M25, because only 40 miles are lit and 80 miles are unlit? Will the Minister consider proposals by any lighting company making a bid to undertake the complete lighting on the M25, because lighting saves lives? Is my hon. Friend aware that non-lighting fatalities cost £206,000 per person?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend will be happy to know that I am shortly to meet representatives of the company which he named. As a Right-winger like myself, in terms of value for public money, my hon. Friend will know that even the most inspired reaction to European Road Safety Year and Energy Efficiency Year should not preclude any lighting proposals going out to competitive tender.

British Rail (Capital Equipment)

18. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss the procurement of capital equipment.

Mr. David Mitchell: The policy of the British Railways board, agreed by Ministers, is for competitive procurement. The implementation of this is a matter for the board.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would the Minister wish to see the retention of railbus production at Workington in the event that the Laird Group succeeds in taking over Leyland Bus? Would he say that the Government and the British Railways Board are more than satisfied with the railbus while it is being produced at Workington?

Mr. Mitchell: I understand that British Rail was satisfied with the production at Workington. As to the competitive sourcing of DMUs, there will still be at least three potential suppliers for railbus and two for Sprinters. That is important to British Rail.

Mr. Roger King: Can my hon. Friend confirm that this Government's investment in British Rail is running at an all-time high?

Mr. Mitchell: I can confirm that British Rail's proposals for investment have been fully met whenever they have come forward and that they have been quickly turned round.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Is the Minister aware that there is widespread anxiety in south Wales about British Rail's announcement during the weekend of major cuts in the south Wales rail network, including the loss of 424 jobs at the Severn tunnel junction, which will decimate railway villages such as Rogiet, Magor and Undy? When the Minister next meets the chairman of BR, will he ask him to reconsider? Will the Minister notify the Secretary of State that there will be some concern about the fact that he has chosen not to make a statement to the House today about this extremely important matter?

Mr. Mitchell: The issues that the hon. Gentleman has raised are for the management of British Rail, but I shall look into the matter and write to him in response to his question.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Law Officers (Advice)

35. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Attorney-General what steps he has taken to ensure that, in future, advice from the Law Officers remains confidential.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): As I informed the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) in a written answer on 13 January, I am satisfied that the arrangements in my Department are adequate and that other Departments are aware of their duty to maintain the confidentiality of any advice which the Law Officers may give them.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is it not fair to say that, in standing before the House and answering the questions of my right hon. and hon. Friends about confidentiality, the Attorney-General is showing that he is accountable to the House of Commons? Why should that accountability not extend to addressing members of the Select Committee, which is examining these matters? Should they not be treated in the same way? What is the distinction?

Sir Michael Havers: It is a well-accepted convention because the usual work of the Law Officers is to give advice, and that advice would not be required by a Select Committee.

Mr. Stokes: Will my right hon. and learned Friend remember that the question is, I think, asked not out of devotion to the British constitution but to stir up trouble, and that these things are far better left to the old conventions on which we have managed our affairs for many centuries?

Sir Michael Havers: I agree with my hon. Friend. As I have said before, the House should think very carefully before it tries to alter that convention.

Mr. John Morris: Was anybody in the Attorney-General's Department consulted about the possibility of the letter to be written by the Solicitor-General being put into the public domain? When the leak inquiry was set up, did the right hon. and learned Gentleman have reason to believe that it might have been an official leak?

Sir Michael Havers: The answer to the first part of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's questions is no. As for the second, there was no communication at all save for my communication with the secretary to the Cabinet.

Westland plc

36. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Attorney-General if he considered granting immunity from prosecution to any other civil servant involved in the disclosure of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence.

The Attorney-General: No, Sir.

Mr. Winnick: What remains puzzling is why the director of information at the Department of Trade and Industry was apparently given immunity from prosecution but that the same was true for no other civil servant, including Mr. Powell at No. 10, who certainly had a hand in the leaking of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Defence Secretary. Why was the decision to write the letter taken? Does the Attorney-General agree, on reflection, that the Solicitor-General was used by the Prime Minister, and that she prompted him to write the letter to the then Defence Secretary?

Sir Michael Havers: The answer to the first question is that nobody even suggested, let alone asked me to grant immunity to anyone else, so that matter did not arise. As for the hon. Gentleman's second question, I repeat yet again that there was no question of my hon. and learned Friend being used. He carried out his duty in the normal way.

Law Centres (Funding)

37. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Attorney-General if he will make it his policy to take over the funding of law centres currently funded under the urban aid programme when the funding under that programme expires.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): No, Sir. The reallocation of ministerial duties is not a matter for individual Ministers.

Mr. Bowden: Will my hon. and learned Friend acknowledge the good work that is done by many law centres, especially by the Southwark law project? After the ending of urban aid for that project it is likely to be funded by Southwark council, which is a recipient of many of the complaints and cases that the centre receives and conducts on behalf of clients. Therefore, there is likely to be a conflict and unsatisfactory funding.

The Solicitor-General: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right in saying that the Southwark law project does extremely good work. That being so, I hope that the local authority will not stint support for it. It would be wrong for any local authority, in determining its funding responsibilities, to take account of the fact that a law centre encourages individuals to draw attention to any impropriety of such an authority.

Mr. Eastham: May I underline the valuable work that law centres undertake, especially on behalf of the disadvantaged and the poor in inner city areas? Is it not about time that a thorough appraisal was undertaken with a view to the Government coming to some decisions that will mean that local authorities do not have to find money to fund law centres through urban aid, bearing in mind all the restrictions that Government Departments place upon them?

The Solicitor-General: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is right in saying that many law advisory centres undertake extremely good work. However, they are local voluntary organisations and do not form part of the statutory legal services framework. As such, their funding falls for local decision, especially local authority decision.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does the Solicitor-General not recognise that the recommendation of the Lord Chancellor's advisory committee was that money should be found for the continuance of law centres, and that the complacent answer given by his noble Friend in another place last Monday suggested that the Government have no intention of doing anything to help any of the law centres throughout the land? Is he aware that that is unacceptable to those in the legal profession, both the Bar and solicitors, and to the majority of clients who depend upon law centres and Government funding for them for any hope of obtaining decent legal representation in cases which are often important?

The Solicitor-General: I recognise the recommendation to which the hon. Gentleman referred, but I do not recognise the conclusion that he seeks to draw from it. Law centres are part of the local framework by which the statutory legal services are supplemented. Therefore, their funding must be subject to local decision. I believe that that is the right way of proceeding. It is for local authorities to determine their priorities, not for central Government to impose priorities upon them.

Legal Aid

38. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Attorney-General whether it will be open to the legal aid review committee to propose savings in expenditure; and whether he has any particular areas in mind.

The Solicitor-General: Yes, Sir, and it will be for the committee itself to select the areas of review.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Solicitor-General aware that there is widespread concern at the apparent intention of the

Government to cut eligibility for legal aid for the first time since the scheme was introduced? Does he realise that the Law Society and many other bodies have expressed their dismay at the proposal, which is likely to lead to a cut in the right to legal representation for poor people, especially those with families? Can that really be the Government's intention?

The Solicitor-General: I think that the hon. Gentleman is referring to the announcement that was made about dependants last week. The Government keep the working of the legal aid scheme under review at all times, and not only when special review teams are established. There are no plans for further changes in eligibility at present. The reduction in dependants' allowances will in a small way moderate the rate of growth of legal aid expenditure. It still remains true that expenditure in the next financial year on legal aid will exceed that for the present year by far more than can be accounted for by inflation

Mr. Ashby: Has my hon. and learned Friend read the Coopers and Lybrand report on the remuneration of the Bar? Is he aware of the widespread unrest at the Bar? Does he understand that the Bar is most unhappy at the refusal even to negotiate with it and with the attempt to impose a 5 per cent. increase in fees? Does my hon. and learned Friend want to be responsible for the destruction of the Bar?

The Solicitor-General: Tempting though it is, it is not for me to comment upon a matter that is now before the courts.

Solicitors (Rights of Audience)

39. **Mr. Abse** asked the Attorney-General what conclusions have been reached by the Lord Chancellor's Department on the rights of audience of solicitors in the higher courts in the course of its consideration of the desirability of changes in the general practice of the courts.

The Attorney-General: It is the view of the Government that solicitors should be able to deal with certain formal or unopposed matters in any court. We have recently sought the views of both branches of the legal profession and the National Consumer Council on how this might best be achieved.

Mr. Abse: The collegiate of judges met on 13 January, no practice direction has emerged from the collegiate, and we have no definitive statement from the Lord Chancellor's Department. Does the Attorney-General not realise that there is widespread disquiet, however ill-founded it may be, about the belief that backstairs pressures are at work? Will the Attorney-General try to get an early announcement about the matter from the Lord Chancellor's Department, or will he prompt the judges to give the required practice direction?

The Attorney-General: A matter as important as this is a matter for consultation, as the hon. Gentleman will appreciate. In the end it comes down to looking at the public interest. That must be the key to this problem.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Rapid Disbursement Funds

43. **Mr. Bowen Wells** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what money from the Overseas Development Administration budget has become available, either from slippage or because emergency funds have not been taken up, for rapid disbursement during February and March; and to which investments he has allocated it.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): Inevitably, some adjustments within the programme are necessary towards the end of the financial year. I have recently announced new allocations of emergency aid for the Sudan and refugee relief in African countries, involving some £5 million of expected spending in the current financial year.

Mr. Wells: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that only £5 million has been underspent in the expected expenditure at the beginning of the year? If that is so I am rather surprised, because it would be one of the lowest figures ever in the ODA budget. Does this need to disperse money quickly not militate against long-term development projects, particularly in agriculture, which we should be undertaking, or is it a result of African and other countries becoming so impoverished over the last 10 years that they are unable to implement the projects for which my right hon. Friend has allocated money? Is there not a case for a longer carry-over period, so that the projects can be carried out and properly funded in the following years?

Mr. Raison: Obviously there would be some convenience to me and to my Department if we had a long carry-over period. One must recognise that public expenditure requires a tight discipline and the system used for a long time is, broadly, effective.

Mr. Anderson: Does the Minister recognise the danger of aid fatigue on the part of donors, in view of the immense effort put in over the past year, particularly by voluntary agencies? What attempt will he make by way of example, through Government expenditure and generally, to spearhead a public relations exercise to show the continuing need in Africa?

Mr. Raison: People talk about the possibility of aid fatigue as it is called, and such fatigue may exist in the voluntary sector. However, the signs are that the British public still have a great determination to play a part in solving the problems of Africa, and the Government are equally committed to solving those problems.

Kenya

44. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department provides for rural development in Kenya.

Mr. Raison: In 1985-86 we expect to spend about £11·3 million to assist development in rural areas in Kenya. This covers activities in agriculture, livestock production, forestry, health, transport and the training of teachers for rural schools. I have just agreed to a grant of a further £4·37 million for applied research in the Embu, Meru and Isiolo districts, where we are seeking to achieve better use of arid lands.

Mr. Merchant: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what contribution is being made from our aid programme towards the health and population programme in Kenya? There is high population growth in that country and anxiety has been expressed there about the increased rise in the population.

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend is right. The rate of population growth in Kenya is over 4 per cent. a year, and that is one of the highest rates in the world. We are contributing to an integrated rural health and family planning project. We have also financed the construction of six rural dispensaries and a rural demonstration centre, and have recently undertaken to finance a district hospital in Isiolo.

Mr. Beith: Was the right hon. Gentleman satisfied, after his visit to Kenya, that expenditure of so large a sum of money—£21 million of last year's aid—on the Nkubu road project was a satisfactory priority and one that was well directed towards rural economic needs?

Mr. Raison: I was completely satisfied. The road is a fine piece of engineering. On top of that, the project is essentially designed to serve the rural community east of Mount Kenya, and I am sure that it will do that.

Mr. Moynihan: Will my right hon. Friend consider more smallholder agricultural projects in rural development schemes in Kenya?

Mr. Raison: My hon. Friend has made a good point. I should be happy to discuss it with him.

Mr. Pavitt: In view of the importance of rural democratic co-operatives for coffee growing and marketing in Kenya, may I ask what special action the right hon. Gentleman is taking to provide the training necessary to enable those co-operatives to play a proper part in rural development?

Mr. Raison: The record of co-operatives across Africa, as elsewhere, is somewhat mixed. They are certainly more useful in marketing than in production. I am happy to look at the hon. Gentleman's specific point.

Aid and Trade

45. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the likely balance in the Vote for the aid and trade appropriation at the end of March.

Mr. Raison: I hope that the Vote will be fully spent, but spending on the aid and trade provision is subject to many uncertainties about the acceptance and timing of commercial contracts.

Mr. Spearing: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the amount can vary considerably? For instance, last year, one project in India—the Balco power station—cost £10 million. If the variation in the aid and trade provision can be so great, is it not possible to vary the amount in respect of rural development projects, such as those to which the right hon. Gentleman referred a short time ago?

Mr. Raison: The essential point one must bear in mind is that all that funding—whether it is the aid and trade provision or conventional aid—has to come out of the overall aid budget. Managing that budget is a difficult operation. I believe that the facts show that our record in managing is very good.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Is that not an argument for making more aid and trade provision commitments so that we achieve the expected disbursement by the end of each year?

Mr. Raison: The aid and trade allocations are much higher than the amount that is taken up. Obviously, not every contract is successful. Getting it right is a difficult matter, but, by and large, I believe that our record is successful.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Surely the reality is that the right hon. Gentleman is planning to increase the aid and trade provision tenfold over the next two to three years—a major increase. Does that not contrast in practice with, for example, the right hon. Gentleman's unwillingness to finance a refugee study programme at the University of Oxford, which would have major implications for developing countries?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman has got it totally wrong. There is no plan to increase the aid and trade provision tenfold during the next few years. There is a sensible plan to bring in a new loan facility, but it will not result in such an increase.

Advancement of Women

47. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for his Department's policy on development of the conclusions of the United Nations Nairobi conference set out in forward-looking strategies for the advancement of women.

Mr. Raison: My Department has long sought to ensure that the interests of women are taken into account throughout the development process. The conclusions of Nairobi, which were accepted by consensus, require implementation by donors and recipients alike. We are doing our full part through the aid programme.

Mr. Deakins: Are not special efforts required from the right hon. Gentleman's Department, particularly in view of the conclusions of the Nairobi conference, which, I am happy to say, are now available in the Vote Office for hon. Members? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, for example, in Africa women do most of the work, including about 90 per cent. of the agricultural work? Surely that should be taken into account in considering aid projects in that part of the world?

Mr. Raison: The hon. Gentleman is right. It is evident that women in Africa and elsewhere in the world have an enormous role. I can claim that my Department has long recognised that role. In assessing projects, we look carefully at their likely impact on women in the area. I believe that we have a good record. I propose to make a grant of £50,000 in the next financial year to the United Nations development fund for women, which I believe will be very welcome.

Crown Agents

48. **Mr. Gale** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied that the service provided by the Crown Agents to other governmental organisations presents, in all cases, good value for money.

Mr. Raison: Yes, but problems arise in all organisations and the Crown Agents should be able to deal with them.

Mr. Gale: I had hoped that my right hon. Friend would take the opportunity to comment on our excellent aid programme in the Gambia. As part of that aid programme, the ODA is supplying Land Rovers. Land Rovers have to be bought through the Crown Agents and commission is paid on them. Would it not be more satisfactory if the ODA were able to buy the vehicles direct from the manufacturer at a discount and thus provide more aid?

Mr. Raison: I can confirm from my own experience that we are running a good aid programme in the Gambia. I acknowledge that there have been problems with Land Rovers supplied by the Crown Agents. However, I think that the case for operating through the Crown Agents is a good one. It is important to have competence and integrity in the procurement operation. I believe that the Crown Agents can provide that.

Falkland Islands

49. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any new plans for land purchase in the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I have agreed to an allocation of £550,743 from the 1982 £31 million Falkland Islands development aid grant to enable the Falkland Islands Development Corporation to buy Fox Bay west from the Falkland Islands Company. The farm will subsequently be sub-divided and sold to local buyers.

Mr. Greenway: May I welcome that admirable news from my right hon. Friend? Does he agree that any move which gives land to local people for development must be good news?

Mr. Raison: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. Our programme has been well judged. We have been careful not to move too rapidly, but I think that the steps we have taken have proved sensible, and we shall continue in that way.

Philippines

50. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the level of overseas aid to the Philippines in each of the last three years.

Mr. Raison: We have a small technical co-operation programme which in the years 1982, 1983 and 1984 amounted to £0·177 million, £0·190 million and £0·225 million respectively. Investments in this period by the Commonwealth Development Corporation and disbursements from the aid and trade provision totalled £6·7 million and £1·4 million respectively.

Mr. Clarke: Does not the contribution which the Minister has just outlined, as well as the House's commitment to human rights, demand that the Minister should take this opportunity to condemn the blatant rejection of democracy in the Philippines? Will he join every other civilised country in saying that the people of the Philippines have voted for a change and it is time that their democratic wishes were respected?

Mr. Raison: It is not for me to comment on the general political position in the Philippines. However, I can confirm that we are watching it carefully from the point of view of aid and thinking carefully about what we should be doing in that area.

Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.

3.31 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Department of Trade and Industry's decision to cancel the decision to extend the deadline date for completing the sale of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd.-Cammell Laird Group.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): Last Thursday the Government proposed a short postponement in the date for the receipt of bids for the sale of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. to allow prospective bidders for the company to tender simultaneously for the first Trident submarine contract. The prospective bidders, however, saw practical difficulties in such a delay and I therefore decided to proceed according to the original timetable.

Mr. Smith: Is it not the case that the Ministry of Defence made representations to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to postpone the date for the sale of the yard and that the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry agreed to such a postponement, that one of the bidders contacted the Minister of State, and as a result it was decided to overturn the decision to delay it, so that it is now going ahead?

Can the Minister explain how it is possible to sell a yard when the asset value of the yard is said to be £40 million but the value of a contract, which has not yet been negotiated, is £400 million? How is it possible to fix any kind of price, having regard to the public interest, when the contract remains unfixed and unagreed? Was the Ministry of Defence not right to seek a postponement until that had been clarified, and is the Minister not wrong not to accept its advice?

As the Department of Trade and Industry has fixed a deadline which is inconsistent with the negotiating timetable of the Ministry of Defence, is it not clear that we have reached another situation in which the Government appear totally incapable of co-ordinating the activity of two separate Departments? Is it not clear also that the replacement of two Secretaries of State has not made the slightest difference to the incapacity of those Departments to work together? Above all, is it not now abundantly clear that the Government's privatisation dogma takes precedence over all other consequences of the public interest, including national defence?

Mr. Morrison: The date for the bids for Vickers shipyard has been known for a long time. Indeed, at the same time, over a long period, the negotiations between the Ministry of Defence and the shipyard on the Trident contract have been continuing, and are not quite finalised. Therefore, it seemed sensible — if the prospective bidders thought it was a good idea—to offer them the opportunity of extending the date for their bids. In the event, they decided not to. Therefore, it would have been incorrect to change the goal posts.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): Would my hon. Friend care to comment on the disgraceful interference in the privatisation programme, for purely commercial reasons, by Trafalgar House? Is he aware that, by delaying for six weeks from tomorrow the date for bids, Trafalgar House would have been able to use its City connections to know the amount of the Vickers' bid, which was to be put in tomorrow? Will my hon. Friend comment on the rumours which are rife, which appear to be well founded, that, once in control of the Vickers group, after a decent passage of time, the Trafalgar House group would close the Shipyards of Cammell Laird and transfer that business to Scott Lithgow, together with the business from Barrow? Finally, is my hon. Friend aware that, by the Ministry of Defence giving the reason for postponing the time scale and finalisation of the Trident contract, that would oblige the present Vickers management to settle that contract on terms which it would not have accepted at arm's length negotiations?

Mr. Morrison: The Government and I are concerned to get the best possible deal on Vickers shipyard so that we have a proper submarine manufacturing capacity——

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): There is one now.

Mr. Morrison: And, indeed, in the private sector. As the hon. Gentleman will recall, it was not until 1977 that the submarine manufacturing capacity of Vickers was put into the public sector.

I apologise to the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) for not answering the second part of his question. I cannot anticipate what bids will come forward tomorrow or, indeed, on what terms.

Mr. Franks: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I shall take it afterwards.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I thank the Minister for maintaining the timetable, which prevents Trafalgar House from gaining undue advantage in the sale. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the loose talk by some Trafalgar House officials that, should they be successful in the sale, they will close Cammell Laird shipyards. As Cammell Laird is the much smaller of the two yards, will the Minister pay particular attention to its interests when he decides what the future of the two yards should be?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman will realise, the bids go to British Shipbuilders, it examines them carefully and it then makes a recommendation to the Government, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Government give consent. The hon. Gentleman makes some important points about Cammell Laird. I realise that he has a constituency interest. I am sure that all those angles will be taken carefully into account before any recommendation is made to the Government by British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Alistair Burt (Bury, North): Will my hon. Friend note the strong feelings on the issue in the north-west of England and accept that the task of promoting the Government's privatisation policy in that area will be made easier by the success of the VSEL consortium bringing, as it does, the interest of management, work force, community, patriotism and the Government together for a change?

Mr. Morrison: I appreciate what my hon. Friend says, but I think he will agree that we have to look at all the bids that come forward, because if we do not look at them all and take the best, that will not be in the interests of privatisation.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Will the Minister assure the House that in their anxiety to encourage privatisation the Government do not intend to construct the contract for the first Trident submarine so as to make cancellation by a future Government extremely difficult even if the British people vote in a general election for such a cancellation?

Mr. Morrison: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the contract is being negotiated on commercial terms. I agree with what he said about the Opposition's current policy towards the Trident missile and submarine. It makes a considerable difference.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is not the bleating of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) predictable in the circumstances? Is it not true that over the past one and half years the Labour party has been telling the people of Barrow that massive redundancies would arise from the privatisation of those shipyards, whether they were taken over by Trafalgar House or by anyone else? Is it not true that the future of those shipyards is fully secured only while they remain in the public sector? Is not the fact that the hon. Gentleman persists in coming to the House and making such ludicrous statements only a reflection of the inadequate way in which he has represented the shipyard workers in Barrow in the House over the past one and a half years?

Mr. Morrison: The real anxiety of all those who work in the shipyards, whether in Barrow or Birkenhead, is the Opposition's policy towards Trident. If it ever comes into being, it will ensure that work prospects on Barrow amd Birkenhead are much lower than they are now.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): How many millions of pounds of taxpayers' money have been spent over the past few years creating the facility to build Trident submarines at Barrow? How can it possibly be in the interests of those taxpayers for that yard to be privatised in advance of the signing of the multibillion pound Trident programme?

Mr. Morrison: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman the precise figure. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I cannot give the figure off the top of my head. The sum will be taken into account when British Shipbuilders reviews the bids. I answered the hon. Gentleman's second question when I answered his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East.

Social Security Benefits (Uprating)

3.41 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the uprating of social security benefits. As the House knows, benefits were increased only three months ago at the end of November. We have made it clear that we intend to move to April upratings from 1987 in order to bring tax and social security closer together and to ensure that benefit changes coincide with changes in rents and rates. The uprating that I am announcing today enables the transition to be made and is the second of these upratings in the 16-month period from November 1985 to April 1987.

Those further increases will be paid in the week beginning 28 July and will be based on the change in prices between May 1985 and January 1986 when the retail prices index rose by 1·1 per cent. The overall cost of the new increases will be an extra £410 million in a full year and they follow the 7 per cent. increases in benefits which were paid from last November. As a result, the retirement pension for a married couple will rise from £61·30 to £61·95 a week and for a single person from £38·30 to £38·70. Public service pensions will be increased by the same percentage as will benefits for disabled people and war pensioners. Mobility allowance will go up to £21·65 a week although transport costs have in fact fallen over the period. The basic rate of unemployment benefit will also be increased by 1·1 per cent. from £30·45 to £30·80 for a single person and from £49·25 to £49·80 for a married couple. Other main contributory and non-contributory benefits will be similarly increased.

I made it clear last year that the Government believe it right to continue child benefit for all children irrespective of the income of their parents, but I also said that we have to consider its level both in relation to overall priorities within social security and with the aim of doing more for families with children on low incomes. I have considered the uprating of child benefit on that basis. My conclusion is that child benefit should be increased by 10p a week to £7·10—rather more than the rate of inflation. The older children's rates for supplementary benefit and the age-related amounts for family income supplement will also go up by slightly more than 1·1 per cent.

Three upratings in 16 months places inevitable administrative burdens and costs on local authorities and local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security. To contain this extra work sensibly I propose to increase the long-term rate of supplementary benefit and the housing benefit needs allowance by the same cash amount as will apply to retirement pension, which means putting supplementary benefit up by 1·1 per cent. although the increase in prices after excluding housing costs is 1·2 per cent.

For similar reasons, I do not propose to make any general changes in the additional amounts paid with supplementary benefit. In some cases no increase would be due in any event, and in others only small amounts. However, I have thought it right to increase the higher rate of heating addition which goes to the very elderly, the severely disabled and to people with homes which are specially difficult to heat. This addition will increase from £5·45 to £5·55 a week.

One other change will be made from this July which is consistent with bringing the current supplementary benefit scheme into line with the new proposed income support arrangements. From the date of the uprating, no new awards of the non-householder housing addition will be made between the ages of 21 and 24. Equally, no deductions will be made from the householder's housing benefit or supplementary benefit in respect of such non-dependants in this age group. This means that the poorest households will remain fully protected. There will be no increase in the amount of non-dependant deductions generally nor will there be any increase in the deduction from benefit which applies during industrial disputes.

There are two other matters I should mention. First, over the last few years there has been a steep rise in supplementary benefit single payments. Since 1981 the number of these payments has risen from under 1 million a year to over 4 million and the real cost has increased by over five times to more than £300 million a year. My hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security has reviewed the position and, as a result, I am today referring draft regulations to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation in the normal way.

Secondly, concern has been expressed over future policy on the payment of benefits at post offices. In a report by the Public Accounts Committee last summer the possibility was discussed that cash incentives should be offered to beneficiaries to encourage payment directly into bank accounts. I am aware that this has led to anxiety that the existence of many sub-post offices might be threatened if inducements were paid which reduced significantly the volume of benefit business which they transact. To remove that anxiety I want to make it clear that the Government do not intend to offer cash incentives. We recognise that very many people wish to retain the option of being paid in cash at post offices, and it is clear that post offices will retain an important role in the payment of benefits in the future. To ensure that the service to the public is as effective as possible, a joint study is being carried out by the Post Office and my Department to see what improvements can be made.

I am laying before the House a full schedule detailing all benefit rates payable from next July. This uprating will mean that in 1986-87 spending on social security will be almost £43 billion—that is 31 per cent. of all public spending.

The last time that an uprating statement was made less than a year after the previous one was in 1975, but the circumstances today are different. In 1975 inflation was out of control and the value of savings was being sharply eroded. Today inflation is low, which is to the benefit of the whole nation—but perhaps most of all to millions of pensioners. This interim increase keeps pensions ahead of the rise in prices since this Government came into office and I will be making a further uprating statement in the autumn.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): Is the Secretary of State aware that an increase of only 1·1 per cent. for pensioners is insulting when, by the time they get it in July, the annual surge in prices following the Budget and rates rises will have pushed up inflation to probably four times that level? Is he aware that it is deeply offensive to offer a single pensioner a crumb of 40p a week, enough to buy a couple of first-class stamps, when at the same time the Chancellor is deploying every device to make tax handouts next month running into thousands of pounds for the well-off and the rich?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that he is cheating pensioners when he says that the change in the uprating date makes no difference and that what pensioners may lose in this uprating they will make up in the next? Is he aware that if the uprating had taken place at the normal time in November, single pensioners would have received double the extra cash from a 4 per cent. increase over a four-month period to April 1987 than they will get under today's uprating from a 1 per cent. increase over an eight-month period to April 1987? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that every time the Government make a simplification or adjustment in social security that always involves a cut, and on this occasion the change in the uprating arrangements will mean a loss for pensioners of £120 million, which they will not recover?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that if Labour's formula for uprating benefits in line with prices or earnings, whichever was higher, had not been levelled down by the Government in 1980, a single pensioner would now be receiving a pension of £4 a week more and a married couple one of £6·50 a week more? Is he further aware that if Labour's earnings link had been retained, even this shortened assessment period of the last eight months, during which earnings rose by over 4 per cent., would have given single pensioners a rise of £1·60 a week, instead of the measly 40p which they are being offered today?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that an increase of 10p for child benefit is piffling and does not begin to compensate 7 million mothers for the loss of 35p per child per week which they suffered at the last uprating?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that it is a mean innovation to lower the uprating formula for the poorest claimants of all on supplementary benefit, which is what he is doing today, and, although the cut today is small, in the future it may involve significant losses for those on the lowest breadline?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the statement means that there will be no increases in 1986 for pensioners under 80 for diets or heating, and that the increases for the very elderly and severely disabled are precisely 10p a week—not enough to keep a bar fire going even for one afternoon?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the statement represents yet another attack on young people's incomes, when the 21 to 24-year-olds are already at the forefront of a Government drive for poverty wages? Is he also aware that the statement heralds the end of single payments for essential furniture, bedding and clothing for the poorest claimants? Where, in future, will a single mother or unemployed family find the money to pay for even a secondhand cooker or gas fire? Is this not paving the way for the abolition under the social fund of claimants' rights for basic essentials which any civilised society would provide?

This Scrooge-like and miserly statement gives no one more than the barest minimum, and it gives millions of pensioners, single mothers, the unemployed and children a great deal less in real terms than they had even last year.

Mr. Fowler: I entirely reject what the hon. Gentleman has just said. He talks about Labour's formula. We have costed Labour's formula on the basis of the interview that

[Mr. Fowler]

the hon. Gentleman gave last week on social security plans. The proposals which the hon. Gentleman is putting forward would mean an extra £15 billion a year. The public will not be taken in by such deceptions.

The uprating follows a 7 per cent. uprating in November, when inflation was only 5·5 per cent. It is the second of three upratings between November 1985 and April 1987. Between May 1985 and January 1986, 1·1 per cent. was the measure of inflation. An autumn uprating statement will follow, based on the period between January and September. We are spending an extra £410 million, which will take social security spending to more than £43 billion.

For pensioners, the increase—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), who keeps on interrupting from the Front Bench, wishes to come to the Dispatch Box and question me, I invite her to do so. For pensioners, the increase comes on top of an increase last November, when pensions were increased by £4 a week for a married couple and £2·50 for a single pensioner. Clearly the Government remain committed to keeping pensions at least in line with prices.

With regard to uprating dates, I believe that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), with his knowledge of social security, will accept that it is not possible to have an uprating at the end of November 1986 and another in April 1987. The DHSS would have to work on two upratings at the same time, and the hon. Gentleman will be the first to confirm that that is simply not possible.

The increase in child benefit demonstrates our belief that, under the tax and social security systems, child benefit is the only way of recognising the added responsibility that children represent. That is why we have increased child benefit by 10p.

On the question of the additional requirements, I have made it clear that we shall uprate the higher rate of heating addition, which goes to the elderly and the severely disabled and to hard-to-heat homes.

The hon. Gentleman is wrong about single payments. He has got the facts wrong, and I suggest that he reads what is set out in my statement.

The hon. Gentleman is saying that low inflation is of no benefit to pensioners. That is untrue. The banana republic economics which the hon. Gentleman wishes to practice, which provides high inflation so that upratings can seem higher, is ludicrous and is entirely in line with the policy of the Labour Government, which presided over an increase in inflation of 110 per cent.

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on maintaining the real value of child benefit. As child benefit is the best way of dealing with family proverty, will he do his best on the next occasion to restore the previous cut?

Mr. Fowler: I shall take into account what my right hon. Friend has said. I accept that child benefit is the only way in the social security and tax systems of recognising the undoubted added expense that children represent. We hope that under the new system of family credit, which will be in operation in 1988, that position will be better recognised and that more low-income families with children will be helped. I shall in the next uprating bear in mind what my right hon. Friend said about child benefit.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): The Secretary of State said that he was spending an extra £400 million. Does he accept that when the increases reach the pensioners' pockets they will be seen as derisory, and that those who do not follow these matters will be confused? As the statutory uprating percentage is small, will he take this opportunity to follow the advice of the SSAC and made the link with earnings, not with price increases? If he were to do that, it would give him the opportunity to appear generous.

Will the Secretary of State tell us more about the terms of reference of the Post Office study and the time scale for the report?

Mr. Fowler: The kind of earnings link which the hon. Gentleman advocates would have cost an extra £3 billion during the lifetime of the Government. From the pensioners' point of view, it is important that pensions should be uprated in line with prices and that inflation should be brought down. The most significant achievement of the Government has been to bring down inflation. Ten years ago inflation was running at between 23 and 24 per cent. That was dramatically bad news for pensioners.

We recognise that many people want payments in cash at post offices, so it is sensible that the service is made as good as possible. We are considering what improvements can be made to counter services in the survey which the DHSS and the Post Office are carrying out.

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the major cause of the synthetic indignation shown by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) is the Government's massive achievement in keeping the rate of inflation at only 1·1 per cent. between May 1985 and January 1986? *[Interruption.]* Can he tell us now, or will he circulate in the *Official Report*, the best and the worst figures for inflation achieved by the Labour Government in any period between May and January, so that we and our pensioners can see the Government's genuine achievement?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is on to the right point, and to judge from the reaction of the Opposition, they also recognise that. I shall seek to set out in the *Official Report* the detailed figures that my hon. Friend seeks. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Derby, South makes a great deal of noise. I wish that she would come to the Dispatch Box and ask me a question. If she is not the Labour party spokesman on social security, perhaps she should make a takeover bid.

During the last period of the Labour Government inflation rose by 110 per cent. That was their economic achievement. At this time 10 years ago, inflation was between 23 and 24 per cent. That was another economic achievement of the Labour Government.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Given the past defeats of the Secretary of State to increase child benefit, I congratulate him on today's announcement and say that it is welcome to both sides of the House. Will he comment on his uprating formula? By changing that formula, has he not gained substantial savings for the Exchequer, which will allow him to double the Christmas bonus? Will he give pensioners that increase, or will cheat them of it?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point on child benefit, which is in stark contrast to the view expressed by the hon. Member for Oldham, West.

With regard to indexing, we are talking about the difference between 1·1 and 1·2 per cent. That is a difference of 5p or 10p, and in some cases there is virtually no difference. The savings made from that would not remotely pay the cost of the increase that the hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): In describing the uprating statement as an insult, was not the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) delivering the most complete insult, by making it clear that a future Labour Government would have learnt nothing from the inflation experience of the previous Labour Adminstration? I note what my right hon. Friend proposes for heating benefits, but does he feel, as some of his hon. Friends feel, that the severe weather payments are not working effectively? Can we anticipate a review of the system before the next uprating statement?

Mr. Fowler: As my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security said, severe weather payments are being reviewed. The House will want the review completed and a decision on it before the next uprating statement. Last year, exceptionally severe weather payments amounted to about £1·7 million. The main help for heating comes both through the supplementary benefit scale rates and through the heating addition. Help with heating costs now totals some £400 million, which is £140 million more in real terms than under the Labour Government.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State confirm that he originally intended to make the statement tomorrow, but that because he was so embarrassed by the fact that it is so mean and miserly he produced it today, thinking that he would get an easier ride in a thin House? I assure him that that will not be so. The choice before the Government was either to give pensioners a real increase, instead of just keeping them up with the cost of living, or to give tax handouts to the rich. The Government have chosen the latter, as we shall see in the Budget, and the pensioners will be screwed again to pay for them.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman has it wrong on both counts—not untypically.

Mr. Foulkes: That is not true.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken, and I shall put it no higher than that. If he seeks to challenge that, any of my hon. Friends and anyone who knows anything about the matter will confirm it.

On the question of tax thresholds, the hon. Gentleman talks about tax reductions for the rich, but the Government seek to take many people on low earnings out of tax. That seems to be a good policy.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I recognise the importance of providing benefits for the needy, but will my right hon. Friend spare a word for the millions of people who must go to work to earn those benefits? Will he assure them that he will not buy short-term cheap popularity at the expense of jacking up inflation?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, and I think that both sides of the House will agree with me on that. The hon. Member for Oldham, West proposes to spend an additional £15 billion to £20 billion a year, which must be raised from taxpayers. I am content to compare the Government's policies with those of the Labour party, because Labour party policies will never be put into effect.

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Is the Secretary of State aware that the 40p a week increase for a single pensioner will purchase about six eggs, two small lumps of coal, one and a half small loaves or 110 peanuts? What has he to say to the 10,000 pensioners in my constituency who are fearful of putting on an electric fire because they cannot meet the bill?

Mr. Fowler: I would say that the increase comes on top of last November's increase, when pensions were increased by £4 a week for a married couple and £2·50 for a single person. I would also tell the people of Erdington that the Government have been more successful than any other Government in recent times in bringing down inflation. The hon. Gentleman had better realise that low inflation is good both for industry and for the millions of pensioners.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Will my right hon. Friend look urgently at the regulations for the extra heating allowance for severe weather in relation to the savings figure of £500, which is wholly unfair? Will he take steps to ensure that applications for money are considered on the basis of receipted bills, not merely unpaid bills?

With regard to the three pension increases during the change-over period, will my right hon. Friend assure me that no pensioner will be worse off in future when the assessment is made, assuming that the three increases are based only on the retail prices index? If that were to be the case, will he ensure that the final increase in the autumn is above the rate of inflation, to take that into account?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot make any promises about the future, but the Government are committed to keeping pensions ahead of prices, and we have also made it clear that we shall abide by the historic method of measuring that inflation. That is fair and reasonable, and that was put before the country clearly at the general election.

I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said about heating, and if we can help along the lines that he has suggested I shall seek to do so. The severe weather allowance is only one, and a small, part of the help with heating that we are providing. The fact that £400 million is being devoted to heating costs shows the priority that we place on that help.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Secretary of State and his Friends in the Tory Government use all the information that he has given the House today and put it in a leaflet for the Fulham pensioners in the by-election campaign? If he does, there is a fair chance that some of his Friends will not want to take the leaflets round, but he will get a few takers among Labour party members, such is the miserly offer that he has made today. Is he aware that he should not have instructed the hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) to come here the other Friday and object to the Standing Charges (Abolition) Bill, which would have relieved pensioners of fairly substantial charges on heating and other bills? Had he not done so, the announcement today, plus a little extra, might have got more than one cheer from the many millions of pensioners, who will now say that there must be a lot of money around because those on top salaries received 19 per cent. extra only six months ago, and top business managers have had increases of 17 per cent. overall in 1985, while the pensioners are to be given 40p. What a scandal. The right hon. Gentleman should be ashamed of himself.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman again ignores the fact that this increase follows the 7 per cent. uprating in November, when inflation was at 5·5 per cent. He also ignores the fact that inflation has been brought down by this Government, which is of considerable benefit to millions of pensioners. As to the heating benefit, the hon. Gentleman also ignores the fact that the Government are devoting £140 million more to heating than did the last Labour Government.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I welcome the figures in my right hon. Friend's statement, notably the continued price protection for pensioners, but does he realise that many Conservative Members would give him the strongest possible support if he would negotiate with the Treasury a real increase in child benefit? The recent record shows that a married man's tax allowance has gone up by 17 per cent. in real terms, but child benefit, before the announcement today, had decreased by 3 per cent. in real terms.

Mr. Fowler: I understand what my hon. Friend says, and clearly the Government have decided, by increasing child benefit, to take account of those feelings. All I can say is that for the next uprating statement in the autumn we shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross Cromarty and Skye): We give the Secretary of State credit for the consolidation of child benefit, although I echo the sentiments expressed on the Conservative Benches that more should be done as soon as possible to restore it to its real value following the developments of last year.

There will be a welcome in many constituencies for the statement about the security of the future of sub-post offices. Is not the most profoundly damaging aspect of the Secretary of State's statement the circular going to the Social Security Advisory Committee for consultation, which encompasses some quite horrendous constraints on future single payments? Does this not auger badly for the future of the social fund? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that by constraining the level and range of single payments the Government, who have become known for selling off the family silver, are showing that they want to inhibit the right of the poor to keep their family furniture?

Mr. Fowler: I thank the hon. Gentleman for what he said about child benefit and the policy on post offices. When he has had a chance to look at the proposals on single payments more closely, he will see the case set out. Single payments have escalated since 1981 from 834,000 to over 4 million in 1985. That is not a simple product of unemployment. In 1981 there were 231 single payments per 1,000 claimants, while in 1985 there were 880 such payments per 1,000. As the hon. Gentleman will know, substantial campaigns are being run by a number of councils and others to increase the take-up of these payments. There is an overwhelming case for reform and the proposals that we have laid out for consultation with the SSAC strike a fair balance between the rights of the individual claimant and those of taxpayers generally.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): Do not pensioners want financial security and predictability, and does not the reaction of the Labour party suggest that it has failed to learn the lessons of the past? Should it not recognise the fear under which pensioners live, of inflation rising again to 25 per cent.? Does my right hon. Friend agree that since the Government came into office pensions have more than kept up with prices, and that what matters to pensioners is not letting inflation run away, as it is the most cruel tax of all?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is right. Pensions in this period of government have kept ahead of prices, but the Government have also brought inflation down. Everything that the hon. Member for Oldham, West has said during this and other exchanges shows that the Labour party has learnt nothing from the past.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): The Minister will know that, despite what his hon. Friends are saying, pensioners want the security of knowing that they can put clothes on their backs, shoes on their feet and coal on their fires, which they will not be able to do following this statement. How much will the right hon. Gentleman save by moving the uprating from November to July?

Mr. Fowler: It is not possible to say that, because there is no way in which I can predict what the May to May inflation will be. That would be the measure if there were an uprating in November, but the whole question is academic because, for the reasons that I have stated, it would not be practical to have a November uprating.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Does not the statement graphically underline the Government's achievement in getting inflation down—something that is of benefit to pensioners in Fulham and elsewhere? Has my right hon. Friend seen the forecast yesterday from the London Business School, which shows inflation moving below 4 per cent. this year, and 3 per cent. next year? Is this not the best possible news for anybody living on a fixed income or having a fixed amount of capital?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, and that is what the public will see as the position. This is good not only for pensioners and those living on fixed incomes but for employment, business and industry. If the Labour party wants to stand as the party of high inflation, it can do so. This party and this Government stand for low inflation, which is to the benefit of the nation.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the announcement of these miserable sums will be greeted with anger and disbelief by pensioners and their organisations everywhere? They will bear in mind his Government's performance when they cast their votes at the next election. Is he also aware that his announcement of a 10p uprating in the heating allowance is adding insult to injury at a time when the severe weather payments are a national scandal? Will he answer the question about how much benefit there will be to the Treasury by changing the formula?

Mr. Fowler: If the hon. Gentleman means the change to May to May, that would depend on the May rate of inflation, and there is no way of knowing that at the moment, self-evidently. Also, there is no way in which we can have a November uprating followed by an April uprating. As to the other points, I am content that the Government are judged on their record in the economic and social sectors, compared with the disaster that we inherited from the Labour Government.

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on increasing the child benefit by more than the rate of inflation, but I gently remind him that the

2·5p per week is modest when set against the 35p a week reduction in real terms last November. Is he aware that many Conservative right hon. and hon. Members will expect even greater progress by the time of the next statement?

Mr. Fowler: I have taken on board my hon. Friend's point. I hope he will recognise that by introducing the family credit system we are seeking to help an additional 200,000 families with children on low incomes. My hon. Friend should concentrate on the two policies, but I shall take into account what he has said about child benefit.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that if he had any self-respect he would feel humiliated at having to make a statement about these miserable increases? Is he aware that one of the reasons for the unpopularity of the Conservative party is that there is a growing recognition that this Cabinet is concerned with helping the rich in every way, and is utterly unconcerned about the plight of the unemployed, pensioners and others who have to live on the smallest possible incomes? Does the right hon. Gentleman not realise how nauseating it is to see Conservative Member after Conservative Member get up in this Chamber and praise him? They are extremely complacent about these increases, although in many cases those Conservative Members are earning large sums of money because they have two, three or four jobs. They are in no position to lecture pensioners who are having to struggle on £50, £60 or £70 a week.

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is making a constituency speech. He is mistaken if he thinks that low inflation is of benefit only to the rich. The Government's policies have resulted in low inflation. We are also trying to take out of tax many more of the people who are on low incomes. Those are the realities, rather than the complete nonsense that the hon. Gentleman talks on every ocassion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall call those hon. Members who have been rising to ask a question, but I can allow these exchanges to continue for only another four minutes before I call the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): If the elderly, the sick, the disabled and those on fixed incomes are the hardest hit by high levels of inflation—which they are—should we not all rejoice at the low level of inflation that underpins my right hon. Friend's statement?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, that is right. I have said during these exchanges that low inflation is of the greatest benefit to the most vulnerable in our country.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on that part of his statement which shows his confidence in the ability of the Post Office and sub-post office network to compete with the banks, provided that no element of subsidy is involved. Will he ensure that pensioners and others retain the right to choose for themselves their method of collecting benefits?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, I recognise the concern. That is why I believe that it is right to make clear the Government's policy. I hope that the statement of policy will be noted not only by those concerned but by the sub-postmasters. Freedom of choice for the beneficiary is implicit in our policy.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what would be the position of pensioners today if inflation were running at 25 per cent., rather than at 5 per cent.? Am I right in thinking that pensions have increased by more than 10 per cent. since the Government came to office in 1979? What would be the position of pensioners if the £24 billion of public expenditure promises that have been made by the Labour party were put into effect? Would not the result be a dramatic increase in inflation?

Mr. Fowler: Since November 1978 there has been a 98 per cent. increase in pensions, compared with a 91 or 92 per cent. increase in prices. A 25 per cent. inflation rate would have the clearest effect on the savings of pensioners. During the last Labour Government savings were eroded and tax was increased. As far as one can tell, that is what is promised by the Labour party if it ever gains power again.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his announcement about the future of sub-post offices. Will he confirm that today's announcement about pensioners means that for the foreseeable future they can rely upon the Government to allow them to continue to use post offices for the payment of their pensions?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. In addition, everyone will have the freedom to choose which form of payment he or she requires.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I, too, thank my right hon. Friend for what he said about sub-post offices. Is he aware that profitable urban sub-post offices are still being closed down by the Post Office? Will he assure me that in his negotiations with the Post Office he will ask it to ensure that it maintains its existing network of profitable urban sub-post offices?

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend's question goes a little further than my responsibilities, but I shall bear in mind what he has said.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I, too, welcome the lifeline that has been given to sub-post offices by my right hon. Friend. Their future has been in question.

When my right hon. Friend has completed his social security review of those who claim unemployment benefit but who may have a job and may not therefore necessarily be unemployed, will he ensure that the additional £410 million is provided for those who are genuinely unemployed and also for doubling next year's Christmas bonus for the elderly?

Mr. Fowler: I cannot give any commitment about the Christmas bonus. However, nobody wants benefit payments to be made if they are not justified.

Mr. Meacher: The Secretary of State has ostentatiously evaded two central issues. Will he confirm that the cuts in pension increases as a result of this double change in the uprating arrangements until April 1987 means that pensioners will lose about £120 million? Will he acknowledge that most of this money will end up in tax

[Mr. Meacher]

cuts which, contrary to the Secretary of State's claims today, the Prime Minister has recently admitted go overwhelmingly to the better off and the rich?

Secondly, the Secretary of State has made several claims about lower inflation. Will he confirm that what matters to pensioners is the real level of the pension increase over and above inflation? Will he acknowledge that after six years of Labour Government the real increase in the pension was 20 per cent., but that after six years under this Government the real increase has been only 5 to 7 per cent.?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman has always ignored, and he continues to ignore, any savings that pensioners may have made. During the period of the last Labour Government inflation increased over 110 per cent. Not a great deal of imagination is required to know what happened to the savings of millions of pensioners. Until the hon. Gentleman takes that point on board, he will continue to bring forward only half-baked social security plans.

As for the May to May proposals, it is not possible to have an uprating at the end of November 1986 and another one in April 1987. Therefore the issue does not arise.

Following is the schedule:

New Social Security Benefit rates

	Old rates	*New rates*
Attendance Allowance		
higher rate	30·60	30·95
lower rate	20·45	20·65
Child Benefit—each child	7·00	7·10
Child's Special Allowance	8·05	8·05
Death Grant (Lump sum)	30·00	30·00
Dependency Additions		
Adult Dependency Additions		
For spouse or person looking after children, with:		
retirement pension on own insurance, invalidity pension, unemployability supplement and, if beneficiary over pension age, unemployment benefit non-contributory retirement pension, invalid care and severe disablement allowance	23·00	23·25
sickness benefit if beneficiary over pension age	13·75	13·90
unemployment benefit:	22·00	22·25
standard rate	18·80	19·00
three-quarter rate	14·10	14·25
half rate	9·40	9·50
maternity allowance/sickness benefit		
standard rate	18·00	18·20
three-quarter rate	13·50	13·65
half rate	9·00	9·10
Child Dependency Additions		
For each child with:		
retirement pension, widows benefit, invalidity benefit, invalid care and severe disablement allowance, higher rate industrial death benefit, unemployability supplement an sickness/unemployment benefit if beneficiary over pension age	8·05	8·05
Earnings Rules		
Retirement Pension	75·00	75·00
Invalid Care Allowance	12·00	12·00
Unemployment Benefit Subsidiary Occupation (daily rate)	2·00	2·00
Therapeutic Earnings Limit	25·00	25·50
Industrial Injuries Unemployability supplement permitted earnings level (annual amount)	1,300·00	1,326·00
War Pensioners' Unemployability Supplement permitted earnings level	25·00	25·50
Earnings rule for Adult dependant's benefit with		
Sickness Benefit where		
claimant is under pension age	18·00	18·20
claimant is over pension age	22·00	22·25
Maternity Allowance	18·00	18·20
Unemployment Benefit where		
claimant is under pension age	18·80	19·00
claimant is over pension age	23·00	23·25
Retirement pension, invalidity pension, Severe Disablement Allowance, Unemployability supplement where dependent living with claimant	30·45	30·80
As above where dependant still qualifies for tapered earnings rule	45·09	45·09
Retirement pension, Invalidity pension and Unemployability Supplement where dependant is non-resident	23·00	23·25
Severe Disablement Allowance where dependant is non-resident	13·75	13·90
Invalid care allowance wife or female housekeeper	13·75	13·90
Child dependency additions		
point at which CDAs payable with long-term benefits are affected by earnings of claimant's partner		
for first child	85·00	85·00
for each subsequent child	10·00	10·00
Family Income Supplement		
Prescribed amount for one-child family, where child is aged		
under 11	97·50	98·60
11-15	98·50	99·60
16 and over	99·50	100·60
increase for each additional child		
under 11	11·50	11·65
11-15	12.50	12·65
16 and over	13·50	13·65
Maximum amount for one-child family where child is aged		
under 11	25·00	25·30
11-15	25·50	25·80
16 and over	26·00	26·30
increase for each additional child		
under 11	2·50	2·55
11-15	3·00	3·05
16 and over	3·50	3·55
Guardian's Allowance		
each child	8·05	8·05

	Old rates	*New rates*
Hospital Downrating		
20 per cent. rate	7·65	7·75
40 per cent. rate	15·30	15·50
60 per cent. rate	22·95	23·25
Resettlement benefit	62·00	62·00
Reduction where wife has pension on own insurance (category A)	22·95	23·20
Housing Benefit		
Needs allowances		
single person	47·70	48·10
couple/single parent	70·20	70·85
single handicapped person	53·20	53·65
couple (one handicapped) or handicapped single parent	75·70	76·40
couple (both handicapped)	78·25	79·00
pensioner addition	·85	·85
dependent child addition	14·50	14·60
Non-dependant deductions/contributions		
Rate rebates		
aged 18 to pension age, and not on supplementary benefit or YTS, nor qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	2·60	2·60
of pension age, or over 21 and on supplementary benefit or qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days*	1·10	1·10
age 16-17 and not on supplementary benefit, YTS or Severe Disablement Allowance	1·10	1·10
Rent rebates and allowances		
aged 18 to pension age and not on supplementary benefit or YTS nor qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days	7·80	7·80
of pension age, or over 21 and on supplementary benefit or qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days*	2·80	2·80
qualifying for modified deduction aged 16-17 and not on supplementary benefit, YTS or Severe Disablement Allowance	2·80	2·80
Disregards for:		
Claimant's earnings	17·30	17·30
spouse's earnings	5·00	5·00
various pensions etc.	4·00	4·00
for maintenance of non grant-aided students (maximum)	23·60	23·85
Deductions		
applied to grant-aided students†		
London	20·80	20·80
Elsewhere	15·75	15·75
for amenities (maximum)		
heating	6·55	6·70
hot water	·80	·80
lighting	·50	·50
cooking	·80	·80
all fuel	8·65	8·80
Expenses allowed for sub-tenants		
furnished letting	3·00	3·00
unfurnished letting	1·50	1·50
garage or outbuilding	·40	·40
Industrial Death Benefit		
Widow's pension		
first 26 weeks	53·60	54·20
higher permanent rate	38·85	39·25
lower permanent rate	11·49	11·61
Allowances for children paid with pension	8·05	8·05
Industrial Disablement Pension		
over 18 or under 18 with dependents		
per cent.		
100	62·50	63·20
90	56·25	56·88
80	50·00	50·56
70	43·75	44·24
60	37·50	37·92
50	31·25	31·60
40	25·00	25·28
30	18·75	18·96
20	12·50	12·64
under 18		
per cent.		
100	38·30	38·70
90	34·37	34·83
80	30·64	30·96
70	26·81	27·09
60	22·98	23·22
50	19·15	19·35
40	15·32	15·48
30	11·49	11·61
20	7·66	7·74
Maximum life gratuity	4,150·00	4,200·00
Unemployability Supplement	38·30	38·70
plus where appropriate an increase for early incapacity		
higher rate	8·05	8·15
middle rate	5·10	5·20
lower rate	2·55	2·60
Adult dependant increase	23·00	23·25
Child dependant increase	8·05	8·05
Maximum special hardship allowance	25·00	25·28
Constant attendance allowance		
normal maximum	25·00	25·30
part-time rate	12·50	12·65
intermediate rate	37·50	37·95
exceptional rate	50·00	50·60
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·00	25·30
Invalid Care Allowance	23·00	23·25
Increase for adult dependant	13·75	13·90
Invalidity Benefit		
Invalidity pension	38·30	38·70
Invalidity allowance		
higher rate	8·05	8·15
middle rate	5·10	5·20
lower rate	2·55	2·60
Maternity Benefit		
Maternity Allowance		
adult single full rate	29·15	29·45
adult dependant full rate	18·00	18·20
adult single three-quarter rate	21·86	22·09
adult dependant three-quarter rate	13·50	13·65
adult single half rate	14·58	14·73
adult dependant half rate	9·00	9·10
Maternity Grant	25·00	25·00
Mobility Allowance	21·40	21·65

	Old rates	*New rates*
One Parent Benefit	4·55	4·60
Pneumoconiosis, Byssinosis, Workman's Compensation and Other Schemes		
Major incapacity allowance (maximum) and allowance for total disablement	62·50	63·20
partial disablement allowance	23·00	23·25
Unemployability supplement; plus where appropriate increases for early incapacity	38·30	38·70
higher rate	8·05	8·15
middle rate	5·10	5·20
lower rate	2·55	2·60
Constant attendance allowance		
normal maximum rate	25·00	25·30
part-time rate	12·50	12·65
intermediate rate	37·50	37·95
exceptional rate	50·00	50·60
Exceptionably severe disablement allowance	25·00	25·30
Lesser incapacity allowance (maximum)	23·00	23·25
—based on loss of earnings of over	30·60	30·95
Retirement Pension		
category A or B—on own insurance	38·30	38·70
category B (lower)—spouse's insurance	23·00	23·25
category C or D—non-contributory	23·00	23·25
category C (lower)—non-contributory	13·75	13·90
graduated retirement benefit (unit)	0·05	0·05
increments to basic and additional pension, guaranteed minimum pension, and graduated retirement benefit	increased by (1·1 per cent.)	
(also paid with widows' and invalidity benefits)		
addition for over 80's	0·25	0·25
Severe Disablement Allowance	23·00	23·25
increase for adult dependant	13·75	13·90
Sickness Benefit		
over pension age		
single rate	36·65	37·05
increase for adult dependant	22·00	22·25
under pension age		
single full rate	29·15	29·45
adult dependant full rate	18·00	18·20
single three quarters rate	21·86	22·09
adult dependant three quarters rate	13·50	13·65
single half rate	14·58	14·73
adult dependant half rate	9·00	9·10
Supplementary Benefit		
Scale rates		
ordinary rates		
single householder	29·50	29·80
couple	47·85	48·40
non-householder 18 or over	23·60	23·85
non-householder 16-17	18·20	18·40
long-term rates		
single householder	37·50	37·90
couple	60·00	60·65
non-householder 18 or over	30·00	30·35
non-householder 16-17	23·00	23·25
dependent children		
over 18	23·60	23·85
16-17	18·20	18·40
11-15	15·10	15·30
under 11	10·10	10·20
Board and lodging		
personal expenses: short term		
single	9.70	9.80
married	19.40	19.60
personal expenses: long-term		
single	10.85	10.95
married	21.70	21.90
personal expenses: dependants		
18 and over	9.70	9.80
16-17	5.85	5.90
11-15	5.00	5.05
under 11	3.25	3.30
Maximum special increase in board and lodging		
single person	17.30	17.50
married couple	34.60	35.00
Personal expenses		
for claimants in private and voluntary residential and nursing homes	8.95	9.05
for claimants in re-establishment centres	9.85	9.95
for claimants in resettlement units	7.50	7.60
for claimants in hospital and local authority accommodation	7.65	7.75
for claimants in the Polish home Ilford Park	10.85	10.95
Additional requirements		
Heating additions (including age-related heating additions)		
higher rate	5.45	5.55
lower rate	2.20	2.20
Central heating additions		
higher rate	4.40	4.40
lower rate	2.20	2.20
Estate rate heating additions		
higher rate	8.80	8.80
lower rate	4.40	4.40
Special dietary additions		
lower rate	1.60	1.60
higher rate	3.70	3.70
haemodialysis rate	10.65	10.65
Blind addition	1.25	1.25
Over 80's addition	.25	.25
Laundry cost deduction	.55	.55
Addition for extra bath	.30	.30
Housing costs		
Reduction for non-dependants aged 18 to pension age, and not on supplementary benefit, YTS nor qualifying for modified deductions after 56 days	7.80	7.80
of pension age or over 21 and on supplementary benefit or qualifying for modified deduction after 56 days*	2.80	2.80
non-householder rent addition	3.90	3.90

	Old rates	*New rates*
repairs and insurance allowance	1.85	1.85
Capital Limits		
For reciept of Supplementary benefit	3,000.00	3,000.00
for single payments and related items	500.00	500.00
for interest on loans for repairs and improvements	500.00	500.00
lower rate voluntary unemployment deductions	100.00	100.00
Other limits		
expenses on starting work	35.00	35.00
religious requirements		
for funerals	75.00	75.00
for repairs	325.00	325.00
Earnings disregard	£4 and in the case of single parents half the next £16	
Deductions for direct payments		
fuel direct		
5% rate	1.50	1.50
10% rate	2.95	3.00
housing costs direct	1.50	1.50
Reduction in benefit for strikers	17.00	17.00
Unemployment Benefit		
Claimant over pension age		
single rate	38·30	38·70
increase for adult dependant	23·00	23·25
Under pension age		
single full rate	30·45	30·80
increase for adult dependant	18·80	19·00
single three-quarters rate	22·84	23·10
adult dependant three-quarters rate	14·10	14·24
single half rate	15·23	15·40
adult dependant half rate	9·40	9·50
War Pensions		
Disablement pension		
private or equivalent (100 per cent.)	62·50	63·20
officer (100 per cent.) (£ per annum)	3,259·00	3,295·00
Age allowances		
40 per cent. to 50 per cent.	4·35	4·40
over 50 per cent. but not over 70 per cent.	6·80	6·85
over 70 per cent. but not over 90 per cent.	9·75	9·85
over 90 per cent	13·60	13·70
Disablement gratuity		
specified minor injury	4,150·00	4,200·00
unspecified minor injury	2,282·50	2,310·00
Unemployability allowance		
personal allowance	40·65	41·10
increase for adult dependant	23·00	23·25
increase for each child	8·05	8·05
Invalidity allowances		
higher rate	8·05	8·15
middle rate	5·10	5·20
lower rate	2·55	2·60
Constant attendance allowance		
normal maximum rate	25·00	25·30
part-time rate	12·50	12·65
intermediate rate	37·50	37·95
exceptionable rate	50·00	50·60
Comforts allowance		
higher rate	10·80	10·90
lower rate	5·40	5·45
Mobility supplement	23·80	24·05
Allowance for lowered standard of occupation (maximum)	25·00	25·28
Exceptionally severe disablement allowance	25·00	25·30
Severe disablement occupational allowance	12·50	12·65
Clothing allowance		
higher rate (per annum)	85·00	86·00
lower rate (per annum)	54·00	55·00
Education allowance (per annum)	120·00	120·00
War widows' pension		
standard rate for widow of private	49·80	50·30
childless widow under 40	11·49	11·61
widows' age allowance		
age 65 to 69	5·35	5·40
age 70 to 79	10·70	10·80
age 80 and over	13·40	13·55
war widow's child addition	11·55	11·55
addition for motherless or fatherless child	12·60	12·60
Unmarried dependant living as wife	47·75	48·25
Rent allowance (maximum)	18·95	19·15
Adult orphan's pension	38·30	38·70
Widower's pension (maximum)	49·80	50·30
Widow's Benefit		
Widows' allowance	53·60	54·20
Widowed mothers' allowance	38·30	38·70
Widows' pension		
standard rate	38·30	38·70
Non-contributory category C	23·00	23·25
Age-related widows' pension		
standard rate		
age 49	35·62	35·99
age 48	32·94	33·28
age 47	30·26	30·57
age 46	27·58	27·86
age 45	24·90	25·16
age 44	22·21	22·45
age 43	19·53	19·74
age 42	16·85	17·03
age 41	14·17	14·32
age 40	11·49	11·61
Non-contributory category C		
age 49	21·39	21·62
age 48	19·78	20·00
age 47	18·17	18·37
age 46	16·56	16·74
age 45	14·95	15·11
age 44	13·34	13·49
age 43	11·73	11·86
age 42	10·12	10·23
age 41	8·51	8·60
age 40	6·90	6·98

* From 28 July 1986 this will read "aged 25 or more for new cases".

† Rate to be increased in September.

BILL PRESENTED

COMMON OWNERSHIP OF LAND

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Tony Banks, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Mr. Eric S. Heffer, Mr. Terry Fields, Mr. Martin Flannery, Miss Joan Maynard, Mr. Bob McTaggart, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Allan Roberts and Mr. Dennis Skinner, presented a Bill to restore to the British people their heritage in the ownership of land: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow and to be printed [Bill [84.].

Children in Care

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

4.27 pm

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): I am sure that all members of the Select Committee on Social Services are glad to have an opportunity to debate, even for a short time, the report that it produced on children in care. The Committee had the benefit of the Government's reply and of the Government's working party on the legal issues. A good deal of evidence has therefore been collected together.

I thank all those who helped the Select Committee in its inquiry into the problems of children in care. The inquiry began in November 1982, which seems aeons ago, but it was interrupted by the general election. In 1983 the Committee decided to pick up the threads again and to complete its report, which was presented to the House in November 1984. The Committee is especially grateful to all the professional and voluntary organisations that gave evidence to it. The Committee is also especially grateful to the local authorities, including two in Scotland. They showed the Committee what they are doing in caring for deprived children who are sometimes delinquent. We are also grateful to those who develop the training of social workers in this difficult and sensitive work.

We learnt much from our visit to Denmark and Holland. We are also grateful to our three specialist advisers who have great experience in social work, administration and research and in the massive intricacies of the law.

Caring for children who are separated from their families is expensive. In 1981-82 we spent £370 million, mostly on residential homes, hostels, and boarding out. It costs £137 a week to keep a child in a community home, £123 a week in a voluntary home and £197 a week in residential accommodation, whereas fostering costs between £60 and £70 a week. We must be sure that we are right when deciding what we are to do to help a child in difficulty.

When we began our inquiry there was a debate going on about the rights of children and of parents. Now it is even more urgent to deal with the many shortcomings that were highlighted recently in the tragic Beckford case. Children in care are not obviously different from others of their age. A small minority might be in trouble for truancy, for example — often the first sign of difficulty in a family. Generally, the parents or other adults are in most need of help in dealing with a child who has difficulties.

We found that 8,400 children are in care because of parental neglect or abuse, 11,200 because their single parents cannot cope, 8,000 because of unsatisfactory home conditions, 5,700 because of parental illness and 3,200 because they have been orphaned or abandoned. Not all the children require long-term care.

Children in care are the victims. They are in care because the care system is designed to protect children against adult society, not to protect society against children. Although the state can never be a substitute for good parents and the good, loving home, it has an overriding responsibility to protect children when parenthood breaks down, for whatever reason.

The Committee accepts that parents and the family have rights and that they should be involved in the process of

care, especially if the break-up of the family can be prevented. However, when the family cannot provide for the child, for whatever reason, the state must intervene. Poverty and unemployment increase the risks of marital breakdown and, therefore, the risk of juvenile delinquency. Many children in care come from families on supplementary benefit who live in poor housing, or from families with too many children. We tend to forget the appalling strain on mothers, especially mothers bringing up children singlehanded. Children from prosperous families are also in care. We must not forget that most children from deprived families are well cared for by their families. We must keep the issue in perspective.

Local authorities are closing down many of their community health and education facilities and their residential homes, so fostering has increased. The number of interim care orders has increased, as have remands into care and matrimonial care orders. That means that the courts have an increasing role in child care.

Our report covers some specific areas which need specific Government action. It makes a number of recommendations for local authorities about the large number of placements experienced by some children. Sometimes they must move within weeks or months from one foster home to another—perhaps for good reasons—but that can be unsettling and set a child back at school. Our report recommends that children attend their reviews where possible so that they are involved in the decisions made about them. We recommended that local authorities encourage foster parent groups. It is important to bring foster parents together so that they can discuss their mutual problems and perhaps exchange good ideas

We say that the inspectorate should assess the way in which local authorities monitor their policies and practices so that good ideas can be passed between authorities. We say that the Department should keep itself well informed about developments so that if necessary other Departments can become involved. Housing and education often need to be involved. While different avenues of research are being pursued, the more consultation across boundaries the better. When more than one Department is involved it is often difficult to bring together different groups of Ministers and civil servants. We hope that the Department will do its best.

We should like to know what progress has been made in recruiting black foster parents. We found that to be a serious gap, according to the evidence taken in the House and as a result of our visits to various local authorities. There is a shortage of black foster parents and there are problems in persuading local authorities to provide support, training and housing accommodation for young people leaving care. It is not good enough that young people should be in care until they are 16 and then be pushed out into the big world. That is the time when they are most vulnerable and in need of help. We must consider the problem of finding accommodation and bringing the Departments together to ensure that provision is made for young people. Lack of care at that age is one of the reasons why so many young people drift to London, all too often with disastrous consequences.

We were encouraged to learn of the formation of the National Association for Young People in Care which gave evidence in the House. We met representatives from that organisation when we visited Bradford where its headquarters are. We found them to be stimulating, intelligent and caring. The association is run by young people who have been in care. They deserve every support, including financial support, that the Department can give.

Is the Minister satisfied with the protection provided for handicapped children in care and leaving care? Such children are vulnerable. What progress has been made with our recommendation that a named medical adviser, should be responsible for the oversight of all children in care in each local authority area? What progress has been made towards establishing a permanent medical practice for children in care? If teachers, social workers, foster parents and others can get in touch with a medical adviser, that could provide the necessary co-ordination.

Doctors and teachers should have some understanding of the wide range of circumstances that can lead to a child being taken into care. That is important for teachers because they will receive children in care into their classrooms. The Blom-Cooper report into the tragic case of Jasmine Beckford shows that many important recommendations were not carried out in that case. That report was made some time after our report was published and showed that inadequately trained young people should not deal with such cases.

We urge the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work to take on board our recommendations about training its students. We urge it to finalise its proposals for the better training of social workers generally, who are expected to carry a very considerable responsibility. We do not underestimate the burdens that social workers, particularly young ones, are expected to shoulder. They carry considerable responsibility for widely disadvantaged groups, and their training should therefore be as adequate, careful and conscientious as possible.

We recommended that the training period should be for three years. It is clear that we have been expecting too much of young, inadequately trained men and women who are very keen to do social work but who have not been adequately prepared. We must extend the training course and improve its content.

I hope that the Minister will have some contact with the central council and will be able to give us some information about that. It is essential for directors of social service departments to provide the support and supervision that young social workers need. In recent cases it has been clear that that has not been provided.

I remind the House that we are still awaiting the Lord Chancellor's proposals, following our recommendations which arose from our visits to Scotland and Denmark, for the setting up of family courts. We saw admirable examples of what can be done in an informal atmosphere to help young people in difficulties, and their families, to deal with their problems. That may not necessitate taking the child away from home. The informal atmosphere that we saw is a great improvement on what can sometimes be a rather adversarial situation in juvenile courts in England. We have much to do to enable the legal side of the inquiries to function more effectively.

Before coming to the House I had some experience as a magistrate and sat on the juvenile bench. During our inquiry I visited three juvenile benches—two in London and one in my constituency—to see whether practice had changed. I was very depressed to find that it had not. The presence of uniformed policemen in the court, the magistrates sitting on a dais separated from the witnesses and the completely bewildered parents, guardians or

[Mrs. Renée Short]

whoever is representing the young person, makes for a very difficult atmosphere. There is no real heart-to-heart conversation, which is necessary if one is trying to find out from a young person what motivated him or her to steal a car or to try to bump a policeman on the head.

We are waiting anxiously for the Lord Chancellor's proposals. We have had the advantage of the review of child care law, which made interesting reading, but it is for the Lord Chancellor's proposals that we are waiting. I hope that this debate will stimulate all of the organisations that are working in this area of social care and that we shall be able to give them, through the decisions made by the Department, all of the help that they obviously need.

4.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): I am very happy to follow the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) and to congratulate her on her personal contribution in these matters. I also congratulate her colleagues on the Select Committee, who have examined this vital topic. It is of the greatest parliamentary and public concern, as recent debates have shown. I refer to the debate initiated by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and the Second Reading of the private Member's Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) a couple of weeks ago.

The Government fully share the anxiety about these matters, which is due to some extent to the steady and depressing succession of child abuse cases that have come to light. It is not possible to make with any confidence any assertion about whether that phenomenon represents a serious rise in the incidence of child abuse or whether such cases are now detected and reported more frequently.

I remind the House that it is no coincidence that the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, which does such good work and of whose Committee my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) is a member, is more than a century old. This is by no means a new problem. There can be no disagreement, however, about our having to do anything to reduce or, as far as possible, eliminate this horrifying cancer in our society.

We must be careful not to over-react to any headline. My colleagues and I will continue to pay tribute to the thousands of unreported successes of social workers and other professionals. They achieve a great deal in extremely difficult circumstances. The Government are not content, however, with present circumstances. As the hon. Lady said, we have responded in Cmnd. 9298 to the Select Committee's report, which we greatly welcome. It made a valuable contribution in an area which is a matter of great public concern, which is complex and sensitive and in which fashions change. Indeed, fashions conflict and there is most certainly no one simple clear solution.

The Select Committee's report covered a great deal of ground. It made no fewer than 108 recommendations and reached 42 conclusions. We tried to respond positively. We also covered much of the ground in the triennial report for 1982-84, which was published last December under the Child Care Act 1980. It, too, is available to hon. Members.

In all of our debates in this House, in all the guidances and consultations which issue from our Department, in the flood of articles in the general media and in the professional journals, in all the deliberations of the courts, our objective must always be to find practical ways in which to help children who may be in need or even in danger. Whatever may be the structure of the court system, the state of the law, the level of liaison and control of all the various agencies involved, in the end, the effectiveness of that whole system must rest to a very large extent on how one adult can work with one child and his family.

We must ensure that he or she has the best and most relevant training for that task and the best possible support from the appropriate services. As the Select Committee states in paragraph 27 of its report, there is a

"crying need for improved liaison between the many statutory agencies involved."

That observation and passages in a number of the other sections of the report highlight a crucial message which also emerges clearly from Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper's inquiry into the Jasmine Beckford case and the reports of other child abuse tragedies. That message emphasises the importance of the role and responsibilities of the elected members of local authorities to see that there are satisfactory arrangements for discharging their child-care responsibilities and that in practice they work as intended.

The local authorities are at a critical point in the whole system. They must ensure that the right staff are selected for this very difficult work and that the staff are given the appropriate training. They must ensure that the social services departments are able to work harmoniously and productively with other departments such as education and housing, and that there is good co-operation at the local level—and I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East about the importance of co-operation and liaison at the national level—but even when co-operation is achieved at the central level, it may not be at the local level.

It is essential, therefore, that there is co-operation at the local level between the local authority and the other agencies involved in the care of children. It is through the elected members of local authorities that the deep public concern about child-care issues can be given its most effective and immediate expression.

In central Government, the responsibility must be to provide the framework in which the local authority and other services can meet the challenges confronting them. One element must, of course, be our responsibility to provide financial resources and we are all aware of the difficulties of funding local government expenditure in the face of mounting pressures and the overriding need for national financial restraint. Against that background, I believe it is encouraging to note that since 1979 expenditure on the personal social services has grown in cost terms by over 19 per cent. and that this year local authorities have again budgeted to provide for expenditure at another record level.

Another area of central responsibility relates to training, and we fully recognise the importance of training and the emphasis, interest and attention on the adequate training of social workers is increasing. The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work, as the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East noted, is very active. It is the independent statutory body

responsible for the approval of training programmes and courses, and resources for that work come from a variety of sectors.

The council's overall expenditure has increased from £7·8 million in 1982-83 to £8·7 million in 1984-85. There has been an increase in the number of social workers and, together with the whole House and the Select Committee, I have been glad to note and welcome the fact that the number of trained social workers has been rising steadily and now stands at over 80 per cent. of the total.

As the hon. Lady said, the council has put forward new proposals for the training of social workers. These are being studied by all concerned, including the Department. We shall closely watch the results of the consultation which the council is conducting with the training institutions, professional bodies, employers and other central Government Departments to determine what the implications would be and how far they are feasible.

The Department is playing a full part in the council's consultations on which the council is to report by the middle of 1986.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I acknowledge the points made by the Minister, but it sounds from his description as if we cannot expect anything positive to happen quickly. What timescale does the Minister's Department envisage for the consultation processes and decisions to take effect?

The hon. Gentleman spoke about the increased expenditure, but over the timescale he mentioned it is arguable, when set in the context of the Government's other social policy, whether that constitutes an increase. The Minister must recognise that, as with the Health Service, the social workers' morale is extremely low. Social workers feel that they are not held in any significant regard by the Government. That is the feeling, but I cannot detect anything in the procedure which the Minister has just outlined which will reverse that fundamental problem.

Mr. Whitney: After talking to a great many social workers over the past few months, I found that they are conscious that they have been fully supported by the Government from the Dispatch Box and elsewhere, during what has been a very difficult time given the horror cases that have been in newspaper headlines.

The Government, of course, are looking for better training. We all recognise the need for that, but that is an area where we must move with due care, taking full account of the consultative processes. We are fully committed to that and I repeat that we welcome and certainly think that it is a matter, not for complacency, but at least for some degree of pleasure, that the number of trained social workers has steadily increased and is now more than 80 per cent. of the total. I hope that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) would not want us to go helter-skelter into a reorganisation of this fundamental and important area. That would be misguided.

The most important of all the Department's roles is to promote the highest standards of practice in all aspects of social work and to ensure that those practices are understood and applied throughout the country. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East mentioned that point. Much of that responsibility rests with the Department's social services inspectorate, an organisation that was formed last April and that has already made a significant contribution in a difficult field, and I pay a warm tribute to what it has achieved so far.

The inspectorate will continue to be as active as it has been in many areas. Last week, for example, it published a report of an inspection it completed of 149 community homes in 29 English local authorities. These homes, as the House will understand, have been going through a particularly difficult time of change. As child-care policies have developed in recent years, a strong emphasis has emerged on reducing the amount of residential provision and the length of time that children spend in it. This has also meant that the homes are being used by those children who need the most concentrated and skilled attention.

The report makes positive recommendations for improvement in a number of areas. For example, it calls for improvements in the integration of field work and residential care staff and closer collaboration between homes and educational and employment services. Again the hon. Lady and I would agree on the need for improvements to continue in that area. Copies of the report, which are availabe in the Library, have been sent to all directors of social services and I am quite sure that they will provide welcome guidance in a difficult area.

Other areas where work by the social services inspectorate is in the pipeline include reports on assessment and supervision in child abuse cases and local authority practice on the provision of access to children in care and in the taking of parental rights resolutions—resolutions by which local authorities can take over all the parental rights and duties for a child in voluntary care. The inspectorate will also be looking closely at the operation of family centres, as recommended by the Select Committee, and on the scope and quality of planning for children in care.

As I said earlier, good social work with children depends on the quality of practical decision making and that is an area in which a number of major research projects have just been completed. The Select Committee recognised the need for research into the development of good social work practice and for the findings of such research to be properly disseminated. We entirely share that view and that is why, with the help of the group of practitioners, we have prepared a document which provides an overview of the findings of these projects and includes summaries of research reports.

The publication is entitled "Social Work Decisions in Child Care" and contains much material which, I believe, will be very helpful to local authorities, other statutory bodies and, above all, practitioners. Again, a copy has been placed in the Library. Important messages from the research include the need for social workers to develop and improve preventive services to keep families together; to avoid over-concentration on the actual point of admission to care; and to take a more positive approach to planning purposefully for children in care, either for return to their family or long-term alternative care. To achieve these objectives agencies need to set clear policy guidelines for staff based on clearer views about their objectives and purposes of care.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I welcome all that my hon. Friend is saying. However, does he agree that one of the great problems is that the concept of care often does not square with the pressures that social workers experience when living and working in urban areas? The

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

turnover of social workers in children's homes often leaves much to be desired and subjects children in so-called care to added strain.

Mr. Whitney: I am sure that my hon. Friend has a valid point. It is one that should be noted by all the local authorities concerned. My hon. Friend will be aware that the move is away from residential care wherever possible, and I hope that it will continue. We hope to work on the need for improved training of workers in residential-care homes.

It is important that we disseminate "Social Work Decisions in Child Care". As a first step, we organised a national seminar on 10 January, which I was privileged to initiate. We were delighted to welcome to that seminar a number of chairmen of social services committees, other elected members and a number of chief officers. This will be followed by a series of regional seminars mounted by the social services inspectorate. We have also commissioned a training package that is based on the findings of the research so that all the benefits can be transmitted quickly to managers and practitioners throughout the country.

I have tried to highlight some of the areas where we are seeking to give practical help to those who have direct responsibilities in this sensitive area. It is not an exhaustive list and there is more to come in a number of areas—for example, our response to Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper's important report on the Jasmine Beckford case.

I should not conclude before referring to two other areas for which the Government and all of us in Parliament must be responsible, and these are the legal and judicial systems operating in relation to children in care.

One of the Select Committee's main concerns was, justifiably, the confused state of the law on the care and protection of children. The Committee commented on the harmful effect of the piecemeal implementation of the Children Act 1975, which I am glad to say is now fully implemented with the exception of a statutory adoption service. The Government responded quickly to the Committee's recommendation for an urgent and speedy review, and a team started work on this major task within two months of the Select Committee's report. It produced a thorough and detailed report to Ministers with commendable speed, given the complexity of the area. The report was published early in October 1985 as a consultation document, and comments were sought by mid-January. We have received over 180 comments which have generally been favourable. We are now in the process of considering this response and taking decisions on what changes need to be made in the law. I hope that it will not be too long before it will be possible to bring proposals before the House.

In fact, many of the report's recommendations simply encapsulate what is already good practice in the best authorities and in the voluntary organisations. In these areas, there is no need for other authorities to wait for changes in the law, which inevitably take time to go through the proper and necessary constitutional arrangements. Better practice can and should be achieved now. But other areas will have to await legislative change, and I would offer the House three examples which illustrate the main themes of the report.

First, given the existing state of the law, it can at present be difficult to take a child into care where serious harm is thought likely in the future. The working party therefore recommended changes so that children can be committed to care more easily by reference to a magistrates' court where substantial harm is thought likely. The working party has also managed to meet one of the Select Committee's main concerns by bringing into line the different legal grounds for care which exist in different legal processes.

Secondly, the working party followed the Select Committee, and indeed the Beckford report, in recommending better safeguards to ensure that removal of a child to care is properly and thoroughly tested by a court and that the parents should have an early opportunity to put their case even if it is not, in the event, accepted. For example, it proposes that there should continue to be power for a magistrate to make an emergency order removing a child from home without the parents necessarily being present to challenge it. But these orders should last for only up to eight days before being carefully examined by a court rather than 28 days at present. This is in line with the Select Committee's report, although I note Mr. Blom-Cooper's report has suggested that these orders should last only 72 hours. We shall need to consider which approach gives the better protection to children, both from harm from their parents and from arbitrary and unjustified removal.

Thirdly, the majority of children enter care not as a result of being abused or neglected, nor because they have offended. The parents of many children simply find themselves unable to cope, generally for a short period as a result of a parent's illness, sometimes for extended periods. As a result, they themselves ask for a child to be taken into care. This includes parents of handicapped children, who can make particularly stressful demands. The working party recommended that we should try to get away from the old stigma of "care" and develop new models of "respite care" to give families a break from caring for a child and of "shared care" where parents share the responsibility of looking after their children with the local authority. This will also ensure in law that any handicapped child living away from home receives the careful supervision and review which the Select Committee recommended.

The House will also have noted that simultaneously with the review of child care law we embarked last October on a consultation on day care legislation, the Nurseries and Child-Minders Regulation Act 1948, and I am glad to say that here, too, we have had a similar volume of helpful responses.

The working party on the reform of child care law emphasised that the changes it proposed would be able to fit either into the present court system or into any future family court system, and the Select Committee itself said that the review of the law should fall short of a fundamental examination of family courts, which must of necessity take longer.

However, there is a powerful and increasing demand for the creation of a family court system, and the Select Committee recommended that the Government should provide the House with a detailed and fully costed scheme for the establishment of such a system. Accordingly the Government set up the family court review to consider the feasibility of a unified family court. That team, which was made up of officials from the Lord Chancellor's

Department, the Home Office, the Treasury and my own Department, will be producing a consultation paper around Easter which will set out the main options for such a court. I share the regret that it has taken the review such a long time to produce a paper, but I hope that the House will recognise the inherent difficulty and complexity of devising a family court which would not only take on jurisdiction in care proceedings but in all other family and domestic proceedings as well.

Many questions arise from the contemplation of such a major step in an area as complicated and sensitive as the administration of justice. There are questions, for example, on the best use of judicial manpower. Would it be appropriate to require judges to specialise only in family law cases? Are lay magistrates to continue to play a role in this field? How are the very different jurisdictions of a county court registrar in a divorce court and the lay magistrates in the domestic court to be brought within a single unified jurisdiction? There are questions of resources and of accommodation. And what would the family court provide for the family which is involved in the multiplicity of court proceedings? To what extent are criticisms of the present court structure really criticisms of a very complex system of law?

I do not have the answers to these questions, but it is certainly not my intention in raising them to suggest that answers cannot be found. I merely wish to make the point that those who say that family courts could be established overnight have probably failed to consider the practicability of the form of family court that they have in mind. I hope that the forthcoming consultation document will focus attention on the many questions involved, and that it will also point the way to the answers which must be found if family courts are to fulfil the hopes now held by so many people about the positive contribution they could make to the handling of the problems of children in care.

I have spoken at length about some of the things the Government are doing in this crucial area. I shall listen to the contributions of all hon. Members during the debate. The care of our children is not just a matter for Parliament and the Government or for local authorities and social workers. It is a matter for each and every one of us as parents, as neighbours and as individuals. Children brought into care represent a challenge to society—all too often a failure of society—that all of us must recognise and deal with.

5.11 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) for the important contribution made by the report of her Committee. One of the most valuable aspects of the Select Committee report was the emphasis on the need to reduce the number of children coming into care. The Government have not responded to that emphasis and that is the Government's most serious failing. Children that are well housed and have a decent income and go to nursery schools are unlikely to find themselves in care.

The Select Committee rightly emphasised the well established link between poverty and reception into care. Not all children of the poor are in care, but most of the children who are are children of the poor. Since the report was written, there has been a relentless increase in unemployment, in the number of people claiming supplementary benefit, and in the number of people who are forced to claim single payments. That means an increase in the number of families where children are at risk because of a combination of poverty and other problems.

The Government's response seems to be that families are better off than they were and long scale rates for unemployed families with children are too expensive. The Government are taking steps that will increase the financial problems of the very families that are already vulnerable. For example, child benefit is a major bulwark against poverty. It is paid to the person who is responsible for feeding and clothing the children, which is usually the mother, and it is used for the purpose intended. It is a universal benefit and does not suffer from the problem of other benefits of a low take-up. The Government have already undermined child benefit by not increasing it last November in line with the rate of inflation. While the Government have not abolished it altogether, I fear they are allowing it to fade away. There is unanimous hostility to the Government's failure to keep child benefit up as a meaningful contribution to the cost of upkeep of a child. There is hostility even from the Government's own Conservative women's organisations.

Mr. Whitney: Would the hon. Lady not agree that the Government's proposals for social security reform and especially for the reform of family credit and income support that concentrates help on the poorest families is the right way to go? Should we not do that rather than continually and steadily spread the family benefit across the board? The statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has uprated above the rate of inflation, but the major thrust of our social security review with the important proposals on family credit and income support is directed towards those members of the population with whom the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and all of us are concerned.

Ms. Harman: The Minister has clearly revealed his hostility to the universality of child benefit. That is precisely why child benefit is so important. The other advantage of child benefit is that it is paid to the person looking after the child, whether or not that person is a wage earner. A further threat to low income families is the proposal in the Social Security Bill that instead of single payments there is a proposal for a social fund. That will plunge tens of thousands of families into further debt because, instead of cash grants for necessary items, families will have to seek payments in the form of loans that are later repayable to the DHSS by way of weekly deductions from the new income support.

There are already 300,000 claimants with direct deductions for fuel payments that amount to about 10 per cent. of their supplementary benefit. This proposal is likely to increase indebtedness, especially among those identified as vulnerable in the Select Committee's report, that is, children of single parents and children of the unemployed. A further threat is the ending of the work expenses disregard for calculating income support. Apparently, work expenses are disregarded when assessing income for the purposes of calculating supplementary benefit. One of the major work expenses, especially for a lone parent, is child care. Because of the drastic shortage of day nurseries and nursery education and the lack of local authority-sponsored child minder places, most single parents have to pay for child care provision while they are at work.

[Ms. Harman]

If a lone parent in part-time work cannot get child care expenses of, say, £20 a week disregarded, that person will become ineligible for supplementary benefit. That means it will be no longer be worth while for that parent to work. That will arise if the Government's proposals go through and would mean an increase in the number of lone parent families where the parent in not working and suffering a combination of isolation and poverty.

The Select Committee not only identified money as being important in preventing families reaching a stage where children have to go into care but highlighted the importance of services. The Select Committee referred to children who are vulnerable out of school, that is, after school hours, in school holidays or during half term. There should be comprehensive provision for out of school care. Children with nothing to do during the school holidays, in half term and after school hours, instead of enjoying themselves, can end up in hospital or in the juvenile courts. Far from encouraging such out of school care the Government are inhibiting its development. Education authorities who might be the main source of such schemes are being told by the Government that they are indulging in spending sprees. Last year the Government cut £400,000 from the urban programme of holiday play schemes. Because of great protest about that, at the last minute the Government restored the money. But it was too late and sponsors of many of the schemes had to cut the length of time they operated or the number of children they were able to care for.

Pre-school care and education is important for all children. The first five years of life are vital for the mental and physical development of children, who blossom when they can play and learn with other children. As a means of preventing children coming into residential care, day care is crucial. In response to the Select Committee's anxiety about provision for the under-fives, the Government have the cheek to say that there has been an increase in day nursery places. I say to the Minister that that has been despite Government action, not because of it. The Government have been trying to reduce local authority spending and have branded as irresponsible councils that have increased spending to expand provision for the under-fives. The increase in day nursery places is attributable to those councils that have refused to bow down to the Government and have stoically defended and improved services in spite of the fact the Government have told them not to do that. The Government have even financially penalised them for doing so.

The list of authorities that make provision for the under-fives bears an uncanny resemblance to the list of authorities that the Government are ratecapping or heavily penalising. For example, at the top of the list for day nursery places for the under-fives are: Camden, Islington, Brent, Lambeth, Manchester, Hackney, Southwark, Liverpool, Greenwich, Lewisham, Haringey and Birmingham. According to the response to the Select Committee report, the Minister apparently thinks it is a responsible policy to provide day nursery places. Perhaps the Minister will tell that to his colleagues in the Department of the Environment and his Conservative colleagues in local councils, because a number of Conservative local authorities provide not a single day nursery place. They are: Cornwall, Warwickshire, West Sussex and Wiltshire. What about those caring Liberal councillors? In the Isle of Wight — the Liberals' flagship, because it is the only authority where the Liberals have had control for a number of years, and where they can be judged on their record—there is not one single day nursery place. This is not because there are no children under five, but because the "caring" Liberals do not think it is important to provide parents with the choice of provisions.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Far be it from me to defend Liberal councils or, indeed, any other kinds of council, except good Conservative ones, but is the hon. Lady really saying that the only form of child care is day nursery provisions provided by the paid staff of a local authority? What about play groups, child minders, voluntary care and all the other people who look after children? Many of them do not require any assistance and would not accept it from the state.

Ms Harman: The hon. Lady was not listening. I said that it was important for local authorities to provide day nursery places so that there is a choice of provision based on what suits the child and what suits the parent. That is what I always say. I said that just as the hon. Lady rose but she was too quick to intervene.

I believe that a statutory duty should be imposed on local authorities to make them take account of the needs of children under five and make available a range of provisions to meet those needs. The Government must ensure that they match with resources the responsibilities of councils to children under five in their area. Not only is this an important step in preventing children from coming into care but it gives all parents what they want —a comprehensive range of services so that they can choose the services that meet the needs of their families.

The Government appear in their response to endorse the Select Committee's correct concern to improve child minding and, in particular, to increase legislation. The Government talk about local authorities "encouraging registration" by making support for child minders available. This will be greeted with hollow laughter from those authorities which are trying to improve the services available to child minders and which are told, as a result, by the Department of the Environment that they are reckless overspenders.

Under the under-fives initiative fund, the National Childminding Association set up three experimental schemes — in Trafford, Southwark and Stafford. Last week, I visited the excellent Trafford scheme and I know very well the work of the Southwark scheme. The schemes' aim was to give children who are minded, minders and parents a better deal by providing support services, training and information for minders, not least about how to recognise signs of child abuse, in case a child minder feels that a child in his or her care is being abused by its parent, and about what to do if his or her suspicions appear to have some basis.

All these schemes are coming to an end. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will respond to this point and tell us what will happen to the schemes. Unless they obtain finance from local authorities—which, courtesy of the Minister's colleagues in the Department of the Environment, already have their backs against the wall —they will disappear. The schemes were an experiment which has clearly worked. However, it is difficult for

councillors to take up this useful experiment and put it into practice — a practice that would benefit hundreds of thousands of children who are minded.

Perhaps the biggest threat to the child minding service comes from the Social Security Bill. I should like the Under-Secretary of State to respond specifically to this point. Two thirds of a child minder's fees are disregarded in assessing eligibility for supplementary benefit. It is not entirely clear, but it is feared by the National Childminding Association and many other organisations that the new social security framework will mean that all child minders' fees will be taken into account when assessing them for supplementary benefit and that they will therefore lose that two thirds disregard. That will mean that a large number of minders will become ineligible for supplementary benefit and, for many, it will mean that it is not worth their while working. Increasing their fees is not an option, not only because the women who are paying the fees are already low paid but because, with the implementation of the Social Security Bill, their position will be even worse because of the ending of the work expenses disregard.

Camden council has estimated that, if the earnings disregard for child minders is ended, it will lose up to 50 per cent. of its minders overnight. Will the Under-Secretary of State assure the House that child minders will not lose their two thirds disregard, as this will undermine one important plank of the provision for children under five?

The Select Committee asked the Government to examine and cost proposals for a family court. The case for a family court is overwhelming. Implementation of the proposals is long overdue. Current court procedures for dealing with children are complex, overlapping and lengthy. Our adversarial system, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East has said, is not always the best way of reaching the correct conclusion on a case. We have no inquisitorial arm for the courts as in the Scottish system. Magistrates and judges are inexpert in these matters because they lack specific training and experience with respect to child care because they deal with a wide range of issues. It is therefore impossible for them to build up the expertise that such a complex aspect of law and public policy requires.

We should do well to remember what Mr. Blom-Cooper said about magistrates in the report on the Jasmine Beckford case. He said that they had been "utterly misguided", had "failed to protect" abused children and should be "publicly upbraided". Clearly, we need to demonstrate the inadequacies of the current system, but they are well known to the Government. Action should be taken. There is a definite demand for a family court.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): The hon. Lady called for action. I believe that in 1974 the Labour party's manifesto called for family courts but, when the Labour party came to power, it found all sorts of reasons not to take action.

Ms. Harman: This has been a long-running saga. It has run for far too long. The time is now right for all vested interests to unleash their grip on whichever part of the system they are hanging on to. It is time for a bit of change and progress. The momentum and consensus behind the family courts issue is enormous. All the organisations involved agree on the need for family courts. There is a broad measure of agreement on the shape of that court.

The Government still have not provided their report on family courts. When may we expect that overdue report? This creates a problem, because the child care law review is nearing its end. The Select Committee's report provided the impetus to that review. There are many organisations whose support for the changes in the substantive law is conditional upon a change in the procedural law. It would be madness to jeopardise the consensus emerging on the substantive law changes by failing to get a move on and to set up family courts.

In a way, the subject of intermediate treatment parallels the child minders' support schemes. In 1983 the DHSS gave £15 million in finance for intermediate treatment. More than 90 schemes have been set up throughout England, providing 3,000 places. They have made a useful contribution by providing courts with an alternative to taking a child into care or imposing a custodial sentence. The money is running out, as the schemes were to continue for only two or three years. The Government have responded by extending the period to six months, but that merely postpones the evil day. The Challenge project in Durham, the Milestone project in Sunderland, the Community Alternative for Young Offenders project in Sandwell and several National Children's Home projects in Devon are under threat because their funding is about to end. I hope that we can have an assurance from the Government that those schemes, when they have taken the initiative of providing pump-priming funding, will not disappear as a result of the enormous pressure on local government finance which the Department of the Environment has been exerting.

When reading the Government's response to the excellent Select Committee report one gets the feeling that the Department of Health and Social Security recognises what needs to be done but refuses to acknowledge it because it is afraid to do anything to undermine the Government's relentless drive towards public expenditure cuts. It is difficult to see how we can improve preventive measures and provision for children while they are in care while the DHSS acts like a sub-division of the Department of the Environment and both the DHSS and the Department of the Environment act like sub-divisions of the Treasury. The DHSS Ministers have abdicated their reponsibility for social services in favour of being an arm of the Government's brutal economic policies.

5.30 pm

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) and I have crossed swords before on child care. I always think that it is rather sad that she seems to feel that children are a burden and that families have to be assisted by the state in all the ways that she has outlined. I think that most Conservative Members would say that most people have children because they want them and they should be encouraged to look after them by themselves as far as possible. The only other party point that I would make is that it is sad that the Labour party has largely seen fit to ignore this debate. For much of it the only other person on the Opposition Benches, Back or Front, has been the hon. Member of Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) who is the distingushed Chairman of the Committee which produced the report.

The report was the first act of the Select Committee in the new parliamentary Session. Although I was a member of the Committee when it produced the report, I was not

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

a member when it did all the work. I would like to pay tribute to all those hon. Members in the previous Parliament who put in what must have been a staggering amount of work, going round the country and visiting other countries to see how child care policies worked. I am sorry that it is likely that I shall have to leave the Committee soon. I regard the work that I have done during the two years that I have spent on it as being among the most valuable things that I have been able to do in the House.

The report is first class with a wealth of excellent detailed work in it. It is a pity that it has taken nearly two years to get to the stage where we are able to debate it, but perhaps the Committee has done quite well in having had a recent debate on community care for the adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped. Much of the current interest in the subject is the result of recent child abuse cases. One could only wish that those feelings of shock and horror among the public, councillors and members of the responsible bodies, such as health authorities, which are aroused when they read the reports of cases in the newspapers were effective at the time they take the decisions which determine what level and what type of resources are available to prevent such cases.

Much of what I feel about such matters arises out of my service in Birmingham. In 1978 and 1979 we commissioned a major report to look at the child care we were providing in an authority which was not poor and which was not divided on political grounds over how to look after our 4,000 children in care. We found to our horror that at that time we were spending about £15 million each year to keep children in care and about £400,000 to keep children out of care. We had 104 children's homes, including nine residential nurseries, many of which were half empty. About 70 per cent. of the children we were looking after came from broken homes and we were shuffling those poor children around like brown paper parcels. As a result of that we changed the pattern of child care in Birmingham. I believe that it has stayed changed. The number of children in care is now below 2,000, so the figure has dropped by about half. My colleagues in Birmingham seem to be making a much better job of it than we did some years ago.

The report examines in detail two of the thorny problems of children in care. On the whole it steers a clear course between the extremes that are offered in the particular problems. I particularly want to direct my attention to two issues—when a child is in trouble, or is to be rehabilitated. Who should we favour, who should we believe and who should we give power to? Should we give power to the parents or the statutory worker, usually the social worker? The other main problem is how should we look after a child when it is in care. Should we aim for children's homes or fostering? Those are the broad arguments.

I shall deal first with the problem of the pattern of care. The report devotes a great deal of attention to that. We should recognise that vested interests are at work in that issue, particularly the National Union of Public Employees. I am not surprised. Why should it not be? If NUPE does not speak for its members I suspect that nobody else will.

Those in children's homes see themselves as offering a safe haven for children at risk, and very often they are doing just that. However, they often fail to see the risks of putting children in homes — the risk of institutionalisation, not only of the children but of the people who work with them. They fail to see the tendency to treat children as brown paper parcels — shuffling children around. We discovered to our horror in Birmingham that the bulk of our homes were set up for short periods of care only. Each child made an average of six moves during their child care career with us, and many children were moved around 10 times or more. Many children set up the move as a means of controlling their environment. They would make themselves exceedingly awkward, get themselves moved and feel that they had managed to achieve something.

Many people in residential child care fail to prepare children for the outside world. That is not surprising when a child never sees a gas bill and thinks that food rolls up on a Monday morning in large refrigerated vans. Residential child care also fails to catch up with changes in the type of child and the type of need.

I have not seen the report of the inspectorate, but I should like to refer to an article by David Hencke in *The Guardian* which deals with that report on children in care. It points out that nearly four out of five residents in homes are now aged 13 or more, and half were first admitted to care after their twelfth birthday. Many of the comments that the inspectors made pointed out that the homes had become unsuitable:

"'Adult-sized young people were sleeping in small beds and occasionally having to use wash basins and lavatories designed for young children.'"

It is not only a matter of the physical environment of the home, but the people concerned have not been trained to look after what are no longer little children or babies but extremely difficult, disturbed and frequently dangerous adolescents. The child care provisions have been set up as if we were running orphanages, but well over 98 per cent. of those children have parents and we are not talking about orphanages at all.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): My hon. Friend has told the House that she was not on the Committee for the majority of its work, but came on to it when the Committee was reconstituted in the current Parliament. Is my hon. Friend aware that the association representing young people in care — the National Association of Young People in Care—gave us strong evidence to support the continuation of residential care homes. It believed that, with those homes being restructured, it was a very valuable facility for those young people who did not want fostering, were not prepared to be adopted and could not go back to their original homes. Will my hon. Friend confess that there are a number of young people who would wish to see residential care homes maintained for the future?

Mrs. Currie: Yes. With the greatest respect to those young people, I wonder how many of them have been influenced by foster parents to speak in favour of fostering. I am not aware of whether the Committee took any evidence at that time from foster children or whether there is an organisation for children who are being fostered, but I feel that the institutionalisation to which I referred can affect everyone concerned, including the children. I am not saying that we should close all children's homes. Perhaps my hon. Friend will allow me to continue and I shall reach the point with which I think he will agree.

I am concerned that residential care staff are often the Cinderella staff of social services departments, which are themselves the Cinderella departments of many local authorities. If we are to move from the staff being frequently untrained, unqualified and often very young, who think they will be looking after little babies and doing a lot of nappy changing but who find to their surprise that they are looking after great hulking teenagers who are in care because of some horror they have committed, we have to ensure that those residential care staff are properly trained, supported, advised and have the appropriate status in terms of the advice that they are able to offer. It always seems curious that it is social workers who feel so hard done by in all these discussions when it is residential child care staff who perhaps have some grievances.

The other extreme of what to do with children in care requires an answer as to whether we need children's homes at all. I think that we do, but I feel that we could make more progress using foster parents. In those local authorities which regard foster parents as a vital and valuable resource, over 50 per cent. or 70 per cent. of the children in their care may be out with foster parents. In that way I believe that children can experience normal home life, and they are offered some kind of model for their future. They come into a home in which rows are not resolved by somebody pulling out a kitchen knife, in which bills are paid and the electricity does not get cut off and in which children are treated with love and dignity and encouraged to treat other people in the same way.

Fostering requires a lot of strenuous effort, and it should not be regarded as a cheap option. It will not be possible to do without some form of residential accommodation especially for severely disabled children and for respite care for those families who might need some assistance from time to time.

The other major hassle to which the report devotes a great deal of attention is the balance between parental influence and the role of professional workers, particularly in the context of the court, but there are other aspects to the matter as well.

For some time there have been moves to take powers away from social workers and return them to the parents. Some of them have been resurrected recently in the case of Mrs. Gillick and the role of doctors vis-a-vis parents and children. I would dub that as the "parents know best" argument. I think that parents usually know best, and that is why I am all in favour of foster parents, but years of seeing what some parents do to their children, and the way in which some parents treat their children, and the way in which some parents have damaged and abused their children, as I saw over all those years in Birmingham, has led me to believe that there are occasions when other people know best. Indeed, sometimes even children know best. I know that it sounds like a cop out to say that we should look at each case on its merits, but that is really the only way.

What is wrong, and what annoys me, is when social workers are blamed by the media for the deaths of children in care. It is worth remembering that Tyra Henry was killed not by her social worker, but by her mother's lover, and that Jasmine Beckford was murdered not by any social worker or health visiter, but by her father. Whether we should regard the social workers as culpable in any way, the fact is that it is the murderers who are in prison, not the people employed by the local authority.

Just as good community policing requires officers who understand the local people and can gain their respect, that is true of social workers and care staff. We have a lot more social workers around. I understand that in 1978 there were 22,000 social workers on the books, and in 1984 there were 24,300, which is a substantial jump. However, I wonder whether, instead of just recruiting more social workers, instead of just looking at the input and the amounts of money that we spend on them, we should not look at the quality of what we are getting. I believe that we should recruit far more social workers from the ranks of mature people who have had families of their own and whose experience of life and child care should alert them when something is going wrong, instead of nice girls with philosophy degrees—often from other countries—from good homes where no one ever tells a lie, and whose understanding of some of the families that they are dealing with leaves a great deal to be desired.

I should like to make one last comment. All children in care are the results of failure. Most are the results of failure in the family. In the survey in Birmingham, which I mentioned earlier, in 1978, 70 per cent. of the children came from a broken home. I guess that if that survey were done again, we would find a much higher proportion, yet all those children had parents. Is it not about time that we thought again about putting together a family policy? My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in a House of Commons written reply back in March 1983:

"Improving family life is one of our principal objectives". —[*Official Report*, 3 March 1983; Vol. 38, c. *204*.]

At the time there was a great deal of discussion about family policy, how to make it effective, and so on. Such thoughts go back to the most impeccable Socialist origins, in 1976, when in *New Society* Brian Jackson suggested a Minister for the family. I believe that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has called for a family policy. The all-party penal reform committee called for a Minister for the family. I suggest that it is about time that we had another look at that.

It is said sometimes that asking for a Minister for the family is rather simple-minded. I am a simple-minded soul, and I think it is worth while looking at whether we can, in a simple-minded way, emphasise once again that the family is important, and the collapse of the family is disastrous, particularly for the children concerned.

Other countries have a Minister for the family. For example, West Germany has something which I understand is called — slightly unfortunately — the Ministry of Family Affairs. All that we have is something called the Study Commission on the Family, funded by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Social Science Research Council, which produces excellent reports that nobody ever reads and, as far as I can see, nobody ever acts on. We can see in the social security reviews that were published last year, and in the Social Security Bill, now in Standing Committee, of which I am a member, the result of not having a family policy or a review of family policy. We found that, contrary to public opinion, it was not pensioners who had become worse off, although everybody believed that, but families with children, whose position had worsened in recent years and nobody had noticed.

I should like to see a Minister for the family, and in the Department of Health and Social Security. Such a Minister could do four jobs. The first job should be to administer that part of the DHSS that supports family life—child

[Mrs. Currie]

benefit, family income supplement and its future incarnations, with all the billions of pounds that are involved.

The second job should be to administer the funds for voluntary organisations that support the family. At the top of my list would be marriage guidance and family conciliation services. The Government's response to recommendation 10 in the report of the Select Committee on Social Services was a little mealy-mouthed. We could wait for ever to prove that those services are worthwhile. Meanwhile the number of divorces increases, the number of children affected by divorce increases, and more and more children are at risk. It is axiomatic that if we help to support good quality, experienced marriage guidance services with some money we might help to keep some marriages together and help some families.

Ms. Harman: I think that the hon. Lady is muddling up marriage guidance counselling, which is an attempt to resolve differences within a marriage and to keep marriages together, with conciliation services, which are about conciliating the partners on the breakdown of a marriage, to ensure that arguments about property, money and the children are kept to a minimum. The two are entirely different. The conciliation services are not for repairing broken marriages, but for minimising the damage that may be caused.

Mrs. Currie: I take the hon. Lady's point entirely. I should not muddle them up; I should help them both. I should particularly help voluntary organisations that are working in the field—not just in marriage guidance. I was involved with the family service units in Birmingham. A Minister for the family should pay more attention to such an organisation.

The third job that such a Minister could do would be to take responsibility for all those bits of legislation that affect the family. I have counted seven different major statutes since 1975 that affect children and the family. One tiny little bit was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State — the triennial report under the Children Act 1975, which has to come to the House. There is more than enough for a Minister to do there.

The fourth job should be to create and promulgate a family perspective, which has been called for repeatedly over the past 10 years, to liaise with other Departments so that the effect of legislative or fiscal action on the family can be highlighted, and so that priorities can be urged to put the family first—for example, the reform of taxation of the family. We have been promised a Green Paper; we have been promised action to assist families where the mother chooses to stay at home and look after the children. We should ensure that that happens. With somebody actually pushing the family perspective, we should make a lot of progress.

We shall never avoid some kinds of child abuse. There will always have to be some statutory intervention when things go wrong. Ultimately, the child has to look to the House and all the delegated responsibilities that we hand down to protect him, but I believe that by strengthening the family and by the other changes that I have suggested we could make a far better job of it.

5·48 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I am tempted to do so, but I shall not follow the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) too far down the line that she has been sketching out. When the hon. Lady described the range of issues with which a Minister for the family would deal and the breadth of responsibility which he would enjoy, it struck me just a little that we were hearing a delicate effort to sketch out a job description for herself. However, I leave it at that. The Minister is warned. There is a problem about proposing new Ministries. The Department of Employment tends to deal with rising unemployment, and the Minister responsible for housing tends to deal with an ever-more rapid decline in the quantity and quality of our housing stock, so if a Ministry responsible for the family were to follow the approach laid down by Ministers elsewhere, I hate to think what we would end up with. Beyond that, the hon. Lady raised a legitimate matter, in which she may have a legitimate interest.

Any discussion of children in care is clouded in the minds of the public by some of the horrific reports of child abuse last year. Yesterday, the *Sunday Times* said that after the enormous publicity following the horrific death of Jasmine Beckford and the subsequent public inquiry and report, there had been a significant increase in the reporting of child abuse. That was also reported in the social work magazine *Community Care*.

Whatever line we take on social policy in the broadest sense, I am sure that we all echo the approach adopted by the Minister when he said that, ultimately, the care of children cannot be a matter only for statutory or voluntary organisations, but must be a matter for us all. I do not want to go too far into the argument about the relationship between poverty, declining social opportunities, increasing social inequalities and the degree of incidence of care for children. However, when referring to that relationship the Select Committee report said:

> "Studies have shown that the majority of children in care come either from one-parent families or from families with an unemployed head of household—or both . . . Social work can however be expected to ensure that the full range of services provided by the state and others reach those most at risk."

The thrust of that observation is self-evident. It shows that those most at risk are often those in the most deprived circumstances. I shall not indulge in a great political harangue about that, as I have no time for such an approach. However, it is an important point that is worth bearing in mind.

In the Government's continuing consideration of children in care, I hope that they will remember the effects of their social security revisions. The announcement this afternoon of the consultative paper to the Social Security Advisory Committee on the future of single payments, and what appears to be a fairly drastic reduction in both the scope and level of single payments to families, cannot be isolated from the subject that we are debating.

Child benefit has already been discussed. I believe it to be a detrimental and retrograde step that family credit will be paid through the wage packet. Some provision should be made for family credit to go direct to the caring parent. It cannot be beyond the wit of the DHSS and those involved in bringing tax and benefits closer together to leave some scope for the benefit for the child to go direct

to the caring parent, which, as we know, is the mother in nine out of ten cases. Obviously the social security reviews and the incidence of deprivation cannot be overlooked.

The Minister rightly said that emphasis must be given to prevention. There is general consensus in the Select Committee report that more should be done to advance prevention as part of the general strategy. The AMA, in paragraph 32, accepted that preventive work was all too often an early casualty of financial pressures. That is an important point. For example, all too often joint funding projects—especially those involving the voluntary sector—are the first to suffer when a local authority's rate support grant is threatened, penalised or cut by the Government because of overspending commitments. That is especially relevant to the taper effect, as most of the burden of joint funding lies with local authorities. Similarly, the preventive aspects emphasised by the Government and the Select Committee, which would command full support, will be an early casualty when there are excessive financial pressures.

I am in no way defending those local authorities which have tried—even if they have backed down at the last minute—to behave illegally by not setting a rate—*[Interruption.]* It is interesting to note the unholy alliance between the two Front Benches, which the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) was so willing to exemplify——

Mr. Whitney: The hon. Gentleman said that he did not wish to indulge in a political harangue—a sentiment that I share—but he has entered into a typical Liberal facing-both-ways attitude. He suggested that he was with us in our approach to overspending authorities, but then demanded more expenditure. He cannot have it both ways, any more than he and his colleagues in the alliance can have it both ways on other matters. He must be clear about that.

The hon. Gentleman should also be clear about the impact of the social security reviews. He should recognise the switch of emphasis in all that we have proposed to give more aid to the families at the lower end of the income scale. I hope that he will have the good grace to acknowledge that.

Mr. Kennedy: In the context of political harangue, it would be tempting to enter into an argument on the Minister's last point about redistribution. The redistribution towards the working poor, if we can so define them, will be at the expense of the childless poor. The redistribution of finance within the family will be away from women and towards men. That is not an egalitarian redistribution.

I have made a common sense argument. It is that we need more emphasis in certain areas, but do not want the confrontation politics that lead to illegality to be the means to achieve that. It is ridiculous to suggest that that is somehow having one's cake and eating it. The Minister is likely to be summoned by the chairman of the Conservative party, beause he committed the unholy crime of referring to the alliance, when he should have referred to the SDP or the Liberal party.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman mentioned prevention with regard to children in care. May I take it from that that he is critical of the Liberal council on the Isle of Wight, which has not provided a single day nursery place? Does he think that the council ought to make provision for day nursery places, or does he condone its complete failure to provide any nursery places?

Mr. Kennedy: My constituency could not be further away from the Isle of Wight. I do not know whether the hon. Lady has visited the area and gained first hand experience.

Ms. Harman: No.

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Lady has not visited the area, but has looked at a set of figures——

Ms. Harman: There is nothing to look at.

Mr. Kennedy: If that is the contempt with which the hon. Lady holds the people of the Isle of Wight, this is a rather ridiculous issue. Before the hon. Lady makes this kind of——

Ms. Harman *rose*——

Mr. Kennedy: Perhaps the hon. Lady will allow me to respond to her question. I said that I did not want to get involved in a political harangue, but I am being goaded by the two Front Benches. If the hon. Lady makes such a point about the Isle of Wight, she should have the courtesy to go there to study the provisions that have been made. I am neither defending nor condemning. I have not visited the area, and I am not willing to speak through ignorance, but apparently the hon. Lady is willing to do that.

Ms. Harman: The hon. Gentleman has misconstrued my intervention. I meant that there is no child care day nursery provision to go to look at.

Mr. Kennedy: The hon. Lady has put that on the record. I would add, however, that the hon. Lady has studied the figures, but that she has not visited the area before pronouncing, tonight and on other occasions, on the level of provision on the Isle of Wight. Perhaps her mail bag is full of complaints. I have not received any complaints about my Liberal partners' dreadful behaviour in this respect. Perhaps the hon. Lady has had a different experience.

I have said enough about preventive aspects. I thought that would be the least controversial of the matters discussed.

The Minister referred to social worker training and to what I thought was a rather depressingly long consultative process. I am not pouring cold water on the idea of consultation. It is necessary, and it has to be practical, and realistic. However, I thought that there was a certain amount of "Sir Humphrey's" style as the Minister described what was involved in the consultative process—the interest, concern and almost watching brief which the Minister's Department was to adopt. It would be interesting to hear the Minister's response to the support which the four social services associations have given to the need for the three-year training of social workers. The three-year training would include modules in particular specialties of the type referred to by the Select Committee on Social Services.

It is clear that the family courts will be the subject of considerable discussion when the report is published after Easter. I acknowledge that north of the border we have a slightly different situation. If I may be so bold, I think that it is one which could be commended to other parts of Britain. In Scotland, emphasis is given to the principles that are discussed in the family courts, whatever shape or

[Mr. Kennedy]

form they may take. The children's panel system is important. The status of the child, the parents or the foster parents—indeed, the whole relationship which is built up within the Scottish system—would repay further attention. Once the report is published, perhaps we will have the opportunity to discuss some of these matters further.

I welcome the debate. The horrific incidents of last year have led to much discussion and public debate. It is important that in the course of this debate—I think the House has done this despite the odd difference of opinion—the matter is discussed in a calm and reasoned way. I hope that the results of these deliberations will be the right ones, especially for children, who are at the centre of our concern.

6.4 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I welcome this important debate. I am delighted to be one of the members of the Select Committee on Social Services which undertook this lengthy and full inquiry into a vital issue of growing concern to all British people.

I commend the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) who introduced the report of the Select Committee. It has been a pleasure to serve under the chairmanship of the hon. Lady for nearly 12 years, as she has provided considerable leadership to the Committee, not least in this report. I do not intend to follow the hon. Lady by giving a broad sketch of the conclusions and recommendations which are, as the Minister has said, 150 in number. I wish to concentrate on wardship and family courts and fostering.

First, I want to pay a tribute, as the hon. Lady has done, to our advisers. They have been immensely helpful to the Committee in a detailed and complicated area involving difficult legislation. I also wish to pay tribute—as I did perhaps in an intervention during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—to the National Association of Young People in Care. Before the association gave its evidence to the Committee I viewed its evidence somewhat dubiously. I wondered about the type of evidence it would give. We met members of the association on one of our visits and subsequently they came before our Committee to give formal evidence. I was highly impressed with their grasp of the problems that faced young people in care. They were not the eight to 10 year-olds, or babies in nappies, or young people who require feeding and the type of advice suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South. They were relatively mature young people, teenagers, who for one reason or another had got themselves into trouble and subsequently into care.

The representatives of NAYPIC were highly articulate and a responsible group of people. The Committee was impressed with the evidence they gave. I wish to emphasise to my hon. Friend that many of them were keen for residential care places to be available for the likes of themselves and those who come after them. These young people could not just be dealt with through fostering, adoption or the other facilities that are available through the social services. They believed that residential care homes were essential, though perhaps not in such large numbers as in the past. However, there remain some young people for whom this type of care is ideal.

I remind my hon. Friend that there has been a great restructuring of the procedures and structure in these homes. The young people do not have breakfast, luncheon and evening meal produced for them as in a hotel or hostel. The young people have to get the meal for themselves and they play an important part in the running of the home under the supervision of residential home care social workers. There is an important role for residential care in the future.

I share the views expressed by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East and by my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South. I believe that fostering can play a vital role in dealing with young people who get themselves into trouble, who are thrown out of their home, or who come under the responsibility of the social services. Will the Minister comment, if he is to respond to this debate, on the three main recommendations on fostering in the report? With regard to fostering contracts, the Committee recommended that guidance on written agreements on foster placements should be included in the guidelines accompanying the revised boarding-out regulations. It is important, not only for the young people who will be fostered but for prospective foster parents, and those who are existing foster parents but who are unsure of their future.

The Committee also recommended a pilot project for the use of voluntary organisations to recruit foster parents. I consider that the voluntary sector has a vital role to play in recruiting foster parents and I believe it will have an increasing part to play in dealing with young children in care in the future.

The Select Committee recommended that local authorities consider extending further support to local foster parent groups. My hon. Friend the Minister rightly talked about the real growth of 20 per cent. since 1978-79 in the allocation of expenditure to the personal social services. But I hope that he will not overlook the fact that the Association of Directors of Social Services, which is in the process of analysing outturn figures for 1985-86 and public expenditure trends, has said that they show that real expenditure in the shire counties is down by 1·07 per cent. on the 1984-85 figures, down by 0·23 per cent. in the metropolitan district councils, and up by 2·81 per cent. in the London boroughs.

I presume that my hon. Friend will say that some of the most deserving areas in inner London are getting the 2 per cent. built-in increase which has been carried forward from 1976, when it was decided that that sort of growth rate was required and it was set out in the Government publication "Priorities for Health and Personal Social Services in England". I hope that my hon. Friend will not take it for granted that every social service in London and the metropolitan districts and counties is benefiting from the substantial increase in real terms that has taken place under this Government.

I am most concerned about child care legislation and the family courts which have been touched upon, particularly by the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East. Our Committee clearly recognised the unsatisfactory state of child care law in Britain. Legislation, as we all know, has developed piecemeal over the years in an attempt to reflect the changing needs and attitudes of society. Our Committee recommended that the DHSS set up a working party on child care law. All the members of the Committee

were impressed by the case put to them for a change in jurisdiction for children and the establishment of what we have come to describe as a family court.

The Government, as the Minister said, have now published as a consultative document their review of child care. I was pleased to learn that that had generated about 1,000 representations to the Department. That is a substantial number and I welcome it.

Mr. Whitney: I said 180.

Mr. Winterton: My hearing is obviously beginning to go as my age advances, but even that is a substantial number of representations and I hope that he will heed what they say.

The Lord Chancellor and the Home Office have established a separate working party to review the case for a united family court and they are planning to issue a consultative document shortly, perhaps in two months' time. I hope that that can be brought forward because it will be valuable in deciding exactly what is required for the establishment of a family court. I, like many members of the Committee, am already sold on the idea of a family court because they already exist and are working extremely well in Scotland. My hon. Friend the Minister may say that the law in Scotland is different. Indeed it is, but the example is there and the precedent is set and the sooner we have it established in England and Wales the better it will be for our dealings with young people.

Let me refer briefly to some of the horrific cases that have been highlighted in the press and media and which have been referred to during the debate. The Jasmine Beckford report refers to the gratuitous comments of the magistrates, which, as we all know, set the pattern for the subsequent handling of that case. In the Andrew Riley case, which relates to my constituency, the decision of the Chester Crown court to make a probation order effectively prevented any subsequent action by the local authority to remove young Andrew Riley from his mother's care, and what a tragedy that turned out to be.

Early in 1982 in Cheshire the social services brought a four-year-old child before the local magistrates court with an application for a care order. Sadly, the magistrates made a supervision order and within four months the child was dead. That mirrors the Wayne Brewer case in Somerset. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters) will not take it amiss if I say that that perhaps casts some doubt on the efficacy of his private Member's Bill.

In 1983 two parents were prosecuted in the Chester Crown court for abusing their little girl. Surprisingly, they were found not guilty, and gratuitous comments by the judge that he entirely supported the jury's verdict and that the case should not have been brought before the court again made the subsequent management of that case difficult. In the event, the Cheshire county council social services department took wardship proceedings and the court was well satisfied with the submissions presented.

The main point that we can draw from the experiences in Cheshire and of the Select Committee is that the Crown court structure was not designed for and is not able to deal properly with the matter that we are discussing. The adult court is concerned wholly with offences and it is clear from the court transcript of the case of Sandra Riley that the need to ensure Andrew's proper protection was not satisfactorily or properly considered.

We all know that the juvenile court has been shown to be seriously deficient in its ability to deal with complex child care cases. I understand from the social services in Cheshire that it increasingly has to have recourse to wardship proceedings in the family division where the proceedings are non-adversarial. There, as some hon. Members know, the priority is overridingly the interest of the child and decisions are made on the basis of probability rather than proof. That is probably the situation nationally, but it is clear that the family division was never intended to deal with the generality of child care cases and as a consequence it is becoming overloaded.

The message to me from cases that have been drawn to my attention and from the Cheshire county council is that we clearly need something akin to the family courts. The director of social services for Islington, Mr. John Rae-Price, would argue for the Lothian type of family courts which now operate in Scotland. From the investigations of the Select Committee and from representations made to me, I believe that in Lothian the reporter would have intervened in the tragic Andrew Riley case in my constituency at an early stage and ensured a proper consideration of that child's interests within the judicial process as it applied to the mother.

The experiences of the Select Committee suggest that there should be an integration of the legal process in all matters relating to children. I make one particularly forceful plea — where child abuse occurs the prime interest should always be that of the child and not of the parents. The child should always be considered first. The parents' interests are important but in no way should they be considered as the first priority. That is the plea which I make not only as a layman, but as a member of the Select Committee. If that position had prevailed in the Andrew Riley case, that young eight-year-old boy, who was drowned in a bath by his mother who had previously killed two of her children, would be alive today. His case would have been treated differently in a family court. I make that plea from the head as well as from the heart.

In arguing for integration of all matters relating to children, I am sure that the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) would support me if I mention the Finer committee of 1974, which recommended a family court. The report states:

> "An institution to which the whole business of family law now dealt with in the Family Division of the High Court, the County Courts and the Magistrates' Courts will be assigned."

The proposals of the Finer committee have not been adopted by any Government in the intervening 12 years, although the debate in professional circles has continued with varying interest.

I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, who chaired the Select Committee, back in her place. The Committee believes that a family court could offer a better service to children and families, but in noting the lack of success under successive Governments does not suggest that family courts are likely to be established unless there is sustained political demand for them. I hope that our recommendation to the Government will be seriously considered and that there will be no procrastination.

In the unlikely event of an alliance Government, the position could be worse, because, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, the alliance is inclined to be a Janus looking in both directions at the same time, wanting more money spent and expenditure pegged to bring down inflation.

[Mr. Winterton]

I look forward to the continued membership of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) on the Committee. He has come on to the Committee only recently by the decision of the House and he has already made a contribution. From the articulate way in which he dealt with the report rather than the political controversy in which he became involved, I am sure that he has a major contribution to make to the Committee.

I make the plea that the Government should seek to introduce in this House, or in another place if that is more appropriate to speed up the process, legislation to introduce family courts. That would be to the benefit of families and to those people about whom I am personally concerned—young people.

6.22 pm

Mr. Dennis Walters (Westbury): My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) had a point when she said that the strictures of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) about the Government's lack of concern would have sounded more convincing if the hon. Lady had not been left so isolated, not only by the Front Bench, but by her Back Benchers. She did not seem to have much support.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short), who chaired——

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): I do not believe that it is fair for Conservative Members to attack Labour Members for not being present. The position has been the same on both sides of the House. No more than six or seven Conservative Members have been in the Chamber since the beginning of the debate, so come off it.

Mr. Walters: I was perfectly cool, but the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) appears not to be cool. The position on attendance was about 15:1. We even had the Secretary of State present during the debate, and it was nice to see him. There would appear to have been a difference of emphasis in the interest shown.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East on her speech this evening and on having chaired the Committee, which presented such an impressive, massive and relevant report. The report runs to several volumes and I cannot pretend that I have read it word for word, but I have studied it carefully and been much impressed by its recommendations.

A few weeks ago I moved the Second Reading of the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, which deals specifically with children in care under court orders. I do not feel that I should debate the Bill now with my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), but I should point out that the Bill does not inhibit the argument about family courts. It aims to introduce in the immediate future reforms and safeguards, which its sponsors from both sides of the House believe would be helpful and relevant.

I had the opportunity on Second Reading to set out the Bill's objectives and to put forward several personal reflections and views on that important and emotive subject. I was able to do so at considerable length and I therefore intend to intervene only briefly tonight to make some observations, of which I hope that the Government will take note.

It is important that the DHSS should reassure social workers that the changes that may be required in child care law do not imply a diminution or loss of their status. Social workers should welcome provisions which reinforce judgments and conclusions reached by them and which, on occasions, might disagree with those conclusions. The speed at which cases are decided should not be significantly affected. As I said on Second Reading of the Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Bill, I strongly believe that if one should err, one should err on the side of caution.

I was concerned about an article in *The Sunday Times* which said that social workers were worried about the possibility that cases would be held up by my Bill, because I do not believe that the proposed adjustments and changes in the law would have that effect.

Costs inevitably feature prominently in discussions of this type. The care of children separated from their parents is an expensive service. The DHSS told the Social Services Select Committee during the preparation of its report that about £370 million was being spent on services for children in care, mostly on residential homes, hostels and boarding houses. At any one time, 18,000 children are in local authority care under section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 because they have been neglected or ill-treated. My Bill is, of course, specifically directed to the protection of those children who have been ill-treated and abused.

The Social Services Committee in its report refers to the fact that

"There is now"—

that is in 1982 and 1983—

"a far greater awareness than 10 years ago of the horrors of child abuse, and of the ways in which children can be protected from the worst of its effects. There are now fairly complex administrative arrangements for detecting and following up suspected abuse."

Prudently and sensibly the Committee went on to say:

"Any temptation to be complacent about arrangements for dealing with child abuse will always be checked by another appalling tragedy."

Sadly, we have witnessed how accurate that comment has proved to be, because not one, but several appalling tragedies have shown that it would be unwise, irresponsible and foolish to be in any way complacent about the level of safety for children under threat of cruelty and abuse.

That brings me back to the question of expenditure. It is inevitable that improvements and changes in this area will cost extra money. It is not invariably the case that improvements cost more. Indeed, there are occasions when streamlining an organisation can make it better, more efficient and, at the same time, less expensive. If we decide to implement some of the proposals of the DHSS review on child care, and some of the recommendations which were spelt out so effectively in the Blom-Cooper report, which include better training and greater resources, greater expense becomes inevitable.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend agree that the improvement in the court system that I suggested would also be valuable? He may be aware that the Sandra Riley case had nothing to do with incompetence or inefficiency of the social services. If anything, it was a breakdown in communication between the psychiatrist dealing with the case and the probation officer. A new court scenario could bring that kind of situation to an end.

Mr. Walters: I agree with my hon. Friend. As I said, my Bill does not inhibit the debate on family courts. I should like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to some of the provisions of my private Member's Bill, which includes improvements in the present court structure, and which would meet some of his points. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's earlier comment that priority should always go to a child. Where a child has suffered abuse, the parents no longer have equal rights with the child, as they would have had if that had not been the case. The child's right must be pre-eminent.

To return to the question of expense, if some of the provisions in my Bill, which introduces new safeguards and better legal procedures to protect vulnerable children in care, are accepted, as I hope that they will be, extra expenditure will also be incurred. We are talking not about vast sums, but about more money. Although I am fully aware of the need to act responsibly over public expenditure, it would be most unwise for the Government to make the issue of cost fundamental to change, reform and progress when dealing with child protection. It is an extremely sensitive area, about which there is widespread and very deep and justified public anxiety. People rightly care profoundly about the matter, and not merely as a result of a few horrifying cases which have recently been brought to public attention. The Government should take heed of that feeling and act accordingly.

6.34 pm

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): Today's debate gives me the opportunity to raise a specific issue that is causing perplexing anxiety among an increasing number of parents. I have one such family in my constituency. Their nightmare began in August 1985 when Louise was admitted to hospital with a spiral fracture of the left femur. The local authority commenced public proceedings against her parents, and during those proceedings 15 witnesses gave evidence, five of whom were doctors. The medical opinion was divided, and at least one doctor, a leading expert on the subject, was convinced that there was no evidence of non-accidental injury. However, the weight of medical evidence was in favour of the other opinion, and on that basis the magistrates made a court order.

I accept that children must have the full protection of the courts, and my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) explained why that must be so. But what about the rights of parents in cases where medical opinion is divided? Louise's parents have no right of appeal against the order, and, subsequently, the local authority can place the child for adoption, terminating nature's strongest bond—that between parents and child.

The terrible aspect of the case I have mentioned is that the child may suffer from a congenital bone disease known as osteogenesis imperfecta. The fracture was entirely typical of the disease, and the child shows at least one sign on clinical examination that she probably suffers from that fairly rare condition. It may be months or even years before another fracture occurs, if she has that condition, but meantime the family may be destroyed.

It seems wholly wrong that parents in such a position have no legal recourse, and I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to institute an inquiry into the injustices practised against such parents.

6.37 pm

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I am glad to take part in the debate and to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) because a similar case has occurred in my constituency.

The case continued for five months and included court cases. Although it has now been solved satisfactorily, to the extent that the child has been returned to the parents, both the child and parents went through a period of agony and nightmare. I wish to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to two points that arise from the case.

First, there is a need for more medical research to establish a diagnosis for the disease without dispute. In my constituents' case there were six medical opinions, two of which held that it was a case of brittle bone disease, but four felt that they could not rule out non-accidental injury. More research should be carried out to establish how we can diagnose this disease beyond doubt.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friends the Members for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) and for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) are drawing into the debate an aspect that has not so far been part of our deliberations. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East believe that in the case to which he refers there was any reason why the social services and other expert bodies might have been worried? Had the social services been involved with the family earlier?

Mr. Thurnham: The family had a good background and there was no question about the care that they gave the child. In view of the divided medical opinion, I do not wish to criticise the social workers, who have to be particularly careful in these cases. The public concern that has arisen in other cases shows the need for such care, as does the fact that these decisions have to be made by a committee, which has to consider all the evidence before it. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to say that there should be more research into the medical causes so that we can have a diagnosis that establishes the matter beyond all doubt.

Secondly, we must have court procedures that do not lead to such long delays. In this case the child was separated from the parents over Christmas. That was a particularly harrowing experience. The court case could not be held earlier because, among other reasons, the court was full of licensing applications. This highlights the need for court proceedings that will enable such cases to be heard more quickly.

I speak from the point of view of my experience of constituency cases that have come to my attention and my personal interest, having adopted last December a severely handicapped child. The child had been in care for eight years, had been with our family as a foster child for two years, and had spent six years before that being shuffled about from pillar to post. Therefore, I have personal experience of the problems of children in care.

This evening, I wish to speak about the most deprived people in our society—handicapped children in long-term institutional care, of whom there are some 3,000, some in NHS hospitals and some in local authority care. The Government's response to recommendation 93 rather misses the point. It calls for the recommendations of the Harvie report, which came out in 1974, to be implemented. However, in their response the Government concerned themselves only with children in voluntary and

[Mr. Thurnham]

other homes, whereas two thirds of such children in long-term institutional care are in statutory institutions, of which NHS hospitals are those that cause the greatest concern because the children may not be properly in care. They may have broken their contacts with their parents and be, to all intents and purposes, parentless, but also not in the care of the local authority from which they came. They may be hundreds of miles away, and not even known to the local authority. The group Exodus has drawn attention to the plight of these children, the number of whom has been substantially reduced. However, there are 500 in NHS hospitals in England and Wales and a further 500 in Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Government should do more to help in such cases.

On the fostering and adoption of handicapped children, I once again ask my hon. Friend to consider the need for standard adoption allowances. Only last month, I had a surgery case of a family that had adopted one handicapped child and had a second handicapped child in foster care. The parents were unable to fund the costs that would be incurred if they adopted the child and thereby lost the fostering allowances. They were having difficulty in heating the house, because the children need to be kept in warm conditions because of their handicaps. They have had to move to a smaller house because they could not manage, and they have asked why more help could not be given to them in their task. As the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mrs. Short) said, such adoption relieves the state of enormous expense because fostering and adopting care is less expensive than institutional care. This family is providing care, but has been hindered in providing it in the way that it would like to do. It should be encouraged to do so rather than discouraged by the financial situation.

I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the case made by the British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering. It strongly feels that there should be standard adoption allowances and that the present scheme, which is sometimes defended as being experimental and providing variety, is nothing but a cause of great confusion. The problems vary from one part of the country to another as local authorities try to come to grips with them in different ways, and find that they cannot do so as they would wish because of the costs involved. I ask my hon. Friend to look at this carefully and come to a decision before he is forced to do so when the present arrangements lapse in 1989.

I have sufficiently covered the points about the brittle bones cases, but I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to work closely with his colleagues in the Department of Education and Science to see whether more provision can be made in the Budget to provide for research into this disease.

Mr. Archie Hamilton (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Bishops (Retirement) Measure

Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.

6.44 pm

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Bishops (Retirement) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen), by Her Majesty's command, acquainted the House, That Her Majesty, having been impressed of the subject matter of the motion, gives her consent, as far as Her Majesty's interest is concerned, That the House may do therein as it shall think fit.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I know that the House expects whoever proposes these Measures to justify them —

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. I am sorry to intervene, but would it be convenient for the two Church Measures to be taken together?

Sir William van Straubenzee: With respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they should be taken separately. I have in mind your ruling about proposed private business, and I shall speak briefly.

The House expects whoever proposes these Measures to justify them. For this Measure, that can be done briefly. A large part of it is consolidation of minor amendments of the law concerning the resignation of a bishop due to incapacity because of physical or mental disability. The Measure sets out the new arrangements for that. Such arrangements were last set out in 1951. The Measure also brings within its ambit similar provisions, although with appropriate amendments, for the resignation for that purpose of archbishops.

It was felt that the arrangements for bishops suffragan and diocesan were unduly burdensome for them to have to be confirmed by Her Majesty in Council. Therefore, this Measure has a new provision which requires a bishop wishing to resign to consult the archbishop of the province and then tender his resignation for approval in a written instrument. The Order in Council will still be necessary for the resignation of an archbishop.

I have the voting figures for the Court of the Ecclesiastical Committee, which deemed the Measure to be expedient, and those for the General Synod. No votes were cast against the motion.

6.47 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Church of England Measures come in a special category of parliamentary business and are normally passed on the nod, because there is a general convention that the Church should be self-governing. Since the famous 1928 Prayer Book case, the House has never decided to go against the advice of the Church of England. Therefore, the general principle that the House has adopted is that if the Church of England wants a Measure, it should have it. That is why the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) presented the Measure with commendable brevity, and without feeing it necessary to argue the details and the merits of the case.

However, this is a specially interesting Measure because we have an established Church. We are talking not just about the resignation of a bishop, but about the removal, under statutory provision, of a Member of the House of Lords. A bishop who sits in the House of Lords enjoys, in accordance with our normal parliamentary language, the status of a lord spiritual. If a bishop wishes to retire on the grounds that he is physically or mentally incapable, there is a proper provision for him so to do. There is no provision for a peer to resign, as I learnt to my cost some years ago. If a Member of Parliament wishes to resign, he or she must apply for an office of profit under the Crown.

I ask the House to consider what would happen if a bishop who is thought to be physically or mentally incapable is asked to resign but does not do so. Two of the senior bishops of the province in which he serves can go to the archbishop of the province and have the man removed from Parliament, not just from the episcopacy. If an archbishop who is mentally or physically handicapped is asked to resign but chooses not to do so, the procedure is slightly more complicated. Two bishops from his province go to the archbishop of another province and the archbiship is removed from Parliament.

I do not intend to oppose the Measure. If that is the way the Church wants to run its affairs, presumably that is the way the House wishes it to run them, but the question that arises is the implication of this Measure for the status of the established Church. I come from a radical background. For a long time I believed, and I still strongly believe, that the more we continue to nod through Measures such as this without examining the implications because we feel that we should not interfere, the more the question of establishment will need to be considered.

The Church of England was nationalised by Henry VIII because of his conflict with the Pope. In one sense it is our oldest nationalised industry. Henry VIII was not prepared to have a foreign potentate exercising great power in Britain. Therefore, the Act of Supremacy was designed to secure that the Church of England conformed to the wishes of the king of the day. The reasons for this have long since disappeared. There is a very wide diversity of faith in Britain. If one considers attendances at communion, other denominations appear to have a larger membership than the Church of England. However, we continue to preserve the fiction of an established Church whose bishops are appointed by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister's powers are now limited to a choice between one or two names that are offered by the commission. But the Prime Minister does not have to be a Christian, let alone a member of the Church of England. The House retains a residual power to determine all sorts of questions, including that of the Prayer Book.

The Church-state link is also uneasy for contemporary reasons that have come to the fore in the last year or two. Bishops have properly found themselves compelled by their faith to make sharp criticisms of the state of which they are supposed to be a part. For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury was rebuked for his sermon after the Falklands war. There have been more recent examples. Bishops have made political comments that have led to counter comments against the bishops because of their theological opinions.

This measure provides a legitimate peg upon which to hang the question whether the link between the Church of England and the organs of the state should finally be severed, notably the link between the Church of England and Parliament. There are many other Christian denominations. Other people call themselves humanists and atheists. People from other countries who come to live here have a range of different beliefs. I refer to the Hindus, the Sikhs and the big Jewish community.

The hon. Member for Wokingham performed his function with commendable parliamentary skill — *[Interruption.]* I am not making fun of him; he presented the Measure in exactly the way that this lingering residual link should be handled in Parliament. However, it is manifestly absurd that we should be asked to deal with the question theoretically by vote although actually on the nod. There are many people—I am one of them because of my radical, liberal background—who believe that it is absolutely wrong that the Church should be an agent of the state, even in the very limited way that this now operates.

I do not wish to oppose the Measure and I shall sit in my place when the vote is called, but I know, because I have spoken out against the Church-state link and in favour of disestablishment, that many churchmen believe that the time has come to negotiate a parting, with good will, between the Church of England and the British state. The implications of this retirement Measure for the membership of Parliament provide a suitable opportunity to raise this matter. It will not be long before the pressure for change is felt. When it is, I hope that the House will play a constructive role in making possible the disestablishment of the Church of England.

6.55 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I wish only to correct the record. In doing so, I welcome my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) to these debates. I have been a Member of Parliament since 1979, and I have attended every debate on ecclesiastical business, bar one. I do not remember having seen my right hon. Friend at any other debate on Church business. Had he attended our debates more assiduously, he would know that Church of England business does not go through on the nod. On 16 July 1985 we rejected the bishops Measure that was considered on that occasion.

6.56 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) is absolutely right. He might have gone further. He might have corrected the history lesson of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and invited him to investigate the true catholicity of the Church of England. What he said was erroneous in many respects. I accept that he did not intend it, but it could cause great offence to many sincere, practising members of the Church of England.

Mr. Benn: When I made a major speech some years ago, I consulted a large number of people who held high positions in the Church. I am sure that the hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) will be the first to admit that there is a large and growing body of opinion in the Church of England that it ought to be disestablished so that its freedom can be preserved and developed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In this debate we are not interested in whether the Church of England should be established or disestablished. The House must confine itself to the Measure that is before it.

Mr. Greenway: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield was allowed to dilate on that point for some time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, that is not my point. The right hon. Gentleman challenged the ancient catholicity of the Church of England, which has something to do with the establishment of the Church of England, but that is not the point that I was trying to make. The autonomy of the Church of England is accepted by most hon. Members, and the function of the House has been described by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

I ask my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) to deal with this question when he replies to the debate. If it is thought that a bishop is physically or mentally incapable and that he should therefore be asked to resign from his see, the Measure does not make clear at what point the procedures will be set in train. People can be seriously physically ill or infirm, but can then recover. They can also be seriously mentally ill or infirm, but can then recover. The result of the Measure might therefore be that bishops are removed from their bishoprics.

I should like to be reassured that these procedures will not be put in hand lightly. A solid assurance ought to be given that a bishop must be immeasurably beyond recovery, either physically or mentally, before this Measure can be enacted, or it could be dangerous.

I should also like my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham to deal with the age at which bishops retire. Does he consider that the present age of retirement is worth having, or does he consider that there should be a retirement age? The Measure relates a little to the retirement age of bishops.

Many agree that bishops and archbishops make their best contributions in old age. I cite in particular Dr. Cyril Barbage, Archbishop of York, who died at 81 years of age, having said when he became bishop that he would retire at 65. He said that he would never allow himself to be called "My Lord" or any other fancy title. He went on well beyond the age at which archbishops and bishops are expected to retire. I hope——

It being Seven o' clock, and there being private business set down by THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS, *under Standing Order No. 7 (Time for taking private business), further proceedings stood postponed.*

British Railways (Stansted) Bill

(By Order)

Order for Second Reading read.

7 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May we have your guidance? I perceive that our appreciation of the Bill's precise effects, if we are to judge it right, is tied up with another measure—the Airports Bill which is now in Standing Committee. Will it be in order to refer to that Bill because it seems to be almost impossible to judge this Bill without reference to that other Bill?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): It will be in order to refer to that Bill incidentally. Hon. Members must not argue too wide a case, but it is in order to refer to it incidentally.

7.1 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Students of British Railways legislation will know that this is the second time in seven days that I have proposed the Second Reading of a British Railways Bill. I make no apologies for that.

This Bill, in common with all its predecessors, relies upon the duties placed upon the board under the Transport Act 1962. The most important of those duties is as follows:

"It is the duty of the Board . . . to have due regard, as respect all those railway and other services and facilities, to efficiency, economy and safety of operation."

This Bill is designed to do precisely that.

I shall outline quickly the structure of the Bill. Part I defines the terms and incorporates the provisions of the general Act which is common to all such legislation. Part II deals with works for which authorisation is sought. Part III authorises the board to purchase land the rights over land. Part IV deals with the incorporation of protective provisions as they relate to the Crown, the police and the electricity, water and gas undertakings. Part V provides a limit, in clause 17, of up to 10 years from the passing of the Bill, the period of starting construction. The two schedules are self-explanatory.

The Bill states:

"By reason of the proposed development and the expansion of Stansted airport by the British Airports Authority it is expedient that the Board should be empowered to construct the works authorised by this Act and to purchase or use the land referred to in this Act so as to provide improved services and facilities for railway passengers travelling to or from the said airport".

It could be a matter for debate whether every airport should have a link with the main railway system. Many people believe that London airport should have had such a facility when it opened after the last war. This Bill is concerned not with other airports, but with Stansted. It reflects a prudent and sensible attitude on behalf of the board to ensure that powers exist to build the railway link, should the proper finance be available.

Work No. 1 relates to the principal work to be undertaken by the board—the Stansted spur road. That involves the construction of a new length of railway of 6,035 m, or just over 6 km, from a point on the London to Cambridge line a short distance north of Stansted station, into the enlarged airport site. The track will be

double as far as the tunnel under the airport runway, single track in the tunnel and be double once again into the airport station which will have two platforms.

Work No. 2 requires that a short length of additional railway shall be built between the London and Cambridge line and work No. 1 to allow direct trains from and to Cambridge. The railway building part of the Bill is substantial but extremely simple. I regard it as an imaginative response to the need to provide proper transport.

Works Nos. 3 and 6 relate to the diversion of certain watercourses necessary to complete works Nos. 1 and 2. Work No. 7 involves the construction of a new road to provide access to the site which, after the building is completed, will be left to provide access for maintenance work.

Work No. 6 gives powers to make and maintain the station under the proposed terminal which will give access directly above to the airport concourse. Clauses 7, 8 and 9 provide additional facilities to ensure that any surface water can be taken away.

The Bill is simple and straightforward, but it has aroused great interest among many hon. Members, who see it as an attempt by the board to favour Stansted over Manchester. I remind the House that in 1984 I moved the Second Reading of a similar Bill to give exactly the same powers to Manchester to enable it to provide exactly the same facilities for travellers to that airport. The board obtained works and land powers under the British Railways Act 1984 for the construction of a railway to Manchester international airport.

The powers were obtained by the board in the face of determined opposition from a property developer and in spite of difficult negotiations with local authorities—the Manchester council and Manchester city council. I hope that hon. Members will not deny the board a Second Reading of a Bill to do for Stansted precisely that which was done nearly two years ago for Manchester because there is no direct relationship between the two schemes. It would be like counting apples with pears to argue that Stansted should not enjoy these provisions because Manchester is being treated as a second-class case. That is not true. Manchester already has such provisions and Stansted is merely being brought into line with Manchester.

Other comments have been made to the effect that in the White Paper on airports assurances were given that there would be some direct linkage between the two schemes and that they would be considered contemporaneously. There is no evidence—certainly not in the White Paper—that there is any order of priority between Manchester and Stansted under the two rail link schemes. They are not in competition and never have been intended to compete.

There are other hon. Members who will, no doubt, wish to raise matters such as the additional traffic on the line to London and the effect it may have on services.

As in the past, I shall do as much as I can to deal with individual problems as they arise, but I can assure the House that the board sees no reason for believing that the new link to the airport will do anything to diminish the service—indeed it should enhance it.

This is a simple, straightforward Bill. It does to an airport in the east what was done to one in the north-west. I hope the House will give the Bill a Second Reading.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The House will wish to know that Mr. Speaker has not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper.

7.10 pm

Mr. Alan Haselhurst (Saffron Walden): This might seem at first sight a fairly straightforward proposition—that an airport which is about to be developed to a scale of some significance should, right from the start, be properly serviced by road and rail.

I am willing to be persuaded that the immediate institution of a rail link would be sensible for the community as a whole, as well as for the passengers who will use the airport. If it is a straightforward proposition that a rail link should be put in, it is extraordinary that London's premier airport, Heathrow, still does not have a surface rail link after 40 years. One cannot help musing about the priorities of British Rail or the Government that we should be asked tonight to approve a rail link for an airport which currently has a through-put of 500,000 passengers per annum when there is still no surface rail link to an airport that is running at 31 million passengers per annum.

I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friend the Minister of State has to say on behalf of the Government. Because of the eagerness of British Rail and maybe of the Government, people who have been vitally concerned with the Stansted issue for some time are suspicious that the name of the game is to maximise the airport's attraction and to ensure that everything possible is done to assist its growth potential.

Let us consider what the effects of a rail link might be. First and foremost, one has to consider the environmental aspects. My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) did not dwell on this, but I would imagine that British Rail has taken great care to ensure that the route of the spur from the main line into the airport avoids the greatest environmental difficulties.

There will, nevertheless, be a problem for the landowners concerned, and these things are never easy to cope with. I came to the Saffron Walden constituency when the shock waves were still being felt from the cutting through that constituency of the M11 motorway. The residual problems of dealing with compulsory purchase were felt for many years and I have no doubt there will be great distress if this Bill is approved and compulsory purchase orders have to be made. I suspect that there will be difficulties in the general environmental sense, but I hope that we may be assured that the route chosen for the rail link will do the least visual harm to an area which is extremely proud of its rural environment.

The second consideration is the effect that the establishment of a rail link, or its absence, will have on roads in the area. There would be some attraction in a rail link to Stansted airport if the result would be less road traffic in the area. We need some explanation of how the relationship is seen. What is the likely effect on road traffic of a rail link? Will it be beneficial to people in my area and in east Hertfordshire in that it will control the growth of traffic or even reduce it?

We are anxious that, so far, the Government have promised no more than £2 million to spend on roads in the area. Essex county council's shopping list is rather greater —£38 million. I do not necessarily wish to endorse that figure, but there is a suspicion that £2 million will be inadequate for our roads. We are understandably worried

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about the effect on our roads of growth at the airport. We shall be interested to know whether establishing a rail link will be beneficial.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): My hon. Friend will know that Hertfordshire's claim for additional expenditure on the roads exceeds that of Essex by £1 million. My hon. Friend must bear that in mind when advancing his argument.

Mr. Haselhurst: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Hertfordshire and Essex county councils are working closely on this matter. The invisible boundary between our two counties makes no difference to the problems of the area, which must be seen as a whole.

The question that exercises minds in my constituency and, I dare say, in neighbouring ones is whether the establishment of a rail link to Stansted will ensure that the airport is a runaway success. We are conscious that, when announcing his decision on airports policy, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State attempted to achieve some form of compromise so that the growth required would be limited or staged. That is the best crumb of comfort on which my constituents, who have been suspicious of and worried about a large-scale airport at Stansted, can feed. They are prepared to make the best of the Government's decision. There is a compromise — we shall have investment in the airport, which will create jobs in the area. The airport will develop to a certain extent. That assurance would be somewhat damaged, however, if they felt that investment was being poured in in the form of a rail link, which would accelerate the pressures on the airport and render the limit set by the Government relatively meaningless in a short time.

My constituents do not regard the link simply from an amenity point of view. They are anxious about whether it will act as an accelerator on airport growth. Hon. Members should bear that in mind. My constituents are not trying to reverse the decision about the airport, but they would like to believe that there will be some reliance on the limitation which the Government set.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I understand that, on St. Valentine's day, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport visited my hon. Friend's constituency and mine and that there was a discussion with various relevant bodies about infrastructure. Perhaps my hon. Friend could say what came of that meeting.

Mr. Haselhurst: I would be trespassing on the goodwill of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Transport if I went too far into that matter as it was a fact-finding visit essentially concerned with roads rather than rail. While I accept the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) that there is an interconnection between the road and rail infrastructure, and I have already referred to that, obviously my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State could not give commitments during his visit as to what the Government might subsequently do in relation to the roads infrastructure. Naturally, I hope that, since he has witnessed the situation, he will advise our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that more should be done than is presently planned.

Some of my constituents are worried that a rail link is simply a means of ensuring extra investment at Stansted to promote the airport's growth and for no other reason. On the other hand, we must consider the possible effect on housing and urbanisation. I understand that a good rail link which would connect such stations as Tottenham Hale, Broxbourne and Harlow Town with the airport would ensure that people seeking employment at the airport from outside the immediate area would have a reliable service to satisfy their needs and curb the need to move into the area thus adding to the demand for new houses with the implications that has for the county structure plan.

That must be considered very carefully, and it is difficult to know whether such a proposition would work. Benefits may arise from a rail link if that link eases the pressure on general urbanisation in the area. It would be helpful to have further information on that point.

The other point to consider with regard to the effects of the rail link relates to the comfort and convenience of the passengers. Some of my hon. Friends will nod with understanding and sympathy when I say that the words "comfort" and "convenience" have not, in the past, been synonymous with Liverpool street station. There are grave anxieties as to whether any form of service could be comfortable and convenient if it runs out of that London terminus.

I am aware that British Rail is undertaking a major redevelopment of the station, which may considerably improve the service. It is worth noting, however, that a working party set up in 1980 to consider rail access to Stansted stated in a Department of Transport report in June 1981 that:

"Liverpool Street is not a good location for the London terminal. It is some distance away from the main tourist centres in the West End, the surrounding area contains few hotels and hotel expansion is unlikely. The road system around Liverpool Street is already congested throughout the day and the Inner Ring Road near Liverpool Street is of a low standard. The additional traffic generated by an in-town terminal would increase the problems considerably. As regards links with the Underground, the Metropolitan/Circle line provides good connections with some BR main line stations, but the Central line, which is the main access to the West End is already severely overcrowded in the peak hours. The 1974 London Rail Study, (Part 2, paragraph 10.4.1) recorded that the Leyton-Chancery Lane section of the Central line was the most severe example of peak hour overcrowding on the Underground: although conditions have improved somewhat since then, London Transport have stated that a very high level of standing continues to occur, and that for the future conditions would remain inappropriate to accommodate air passengers and their baggage."

Although Liverpool street station might be considerably enhanced to benefit regular passengers, its very location — not the quality of service it offers once one arrives there — may be a difficulty for air passengers whose destination we must assume is unlikely to be the City of London but rather the West End. We must find out more about that and if we are being invited to support the rail link we must recognise that it will ultimately terminate at Liverpool street and not at a more convenient station.

My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest who promoted the Bill, said very little about the costings it involves. I believe that the House is entitled to have more information about the project if we are to grant it approval. What is the overall cost of the proposal? My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest did not tell the House what that would be. I hope he will intervene if he does know what the figure is. I understand from answers given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that the Government expect a 7 per cent. rate of return in real terms

on the project, on the capital employed. The Secretary of State will judge that on an equal basis with any other project put before him. We ought to be given some idea whether my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest is satisfied that that rate of return will be achieved.

A considerable sum will need to be yielded in the form of passenger fares if there is to be a 7 per cent. rate of return. I recall that the cost of the electrification of the Bishop's Stortford to Cambridge line was put in 1983 terms at the order of £11 million to £12 million. One assumes that the project under discussion, which involves laying down railway track, boring a tunnel and building a station, will cost somewhat more than that. That figure might presumably be three or four times £11 million or £12 million. One need only carry out some preliminary mathematics to discover that the rate of return may have to be between £2·5 million and £3 million. That is the actual margin—not the total revenue—that has to be found to achieve such a result. That has consequences for the number of passengers who will be required to achieve that result. We need to know more, therefore, about the figures. How many passengers will be using the line? What data did British Rail use to make its calculations to embolden them to bring the matter to the House?

When the working party considered the matter in 1980-81, and the cost of the option—one of four that were originally considered and which is identical to the scheme incorporated in the Bill—it stated that:

"The cost of this option, excluding any essential work at Liverpool Street that would be necessary and excluding any rolling stock requirements, would amount to about £50 million at 1980 prices. BR and BAA have estimated that the cost of the rail spur and associated works would be £47·7 million at 1980 prices but this does not include costs for signalling, electrification and land purchased by BR which have not been separately identified for the rail spur."

How many passengers will be needed to relate to such costs?

At that time, the British Airports Authority was talking in terms of a throughput of 15 million passengers per annum being achieved at Stansted by 1992. That was the other side of the equation when the working study report was made. In view of that evidence, we need precise information as to the present estimated costs and the projected number of passengers using the line. It is evident that a 15 million passenger target at Stansted will not be achieved by 1992 as the terminal is not due to open until at least 1990. In any case, the Secretary of State has said that it may be a facility for only 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. It seems that the figures on the record will require radical readjustment in the light of what we now know. I should like to know how many passengers are expected to use the service, and I should like to have that information presented on the basis of year-by-year growth.

What proportion of the passengers going through the airport will want to reach it by rail? What proportion is it supposed will come from central London? To what extent will Stansted serve the needs of the population of a wider area embracing East Anglia, Colchester, Chelmsford and areas of Hertfordshire? It cannot be assumed that all the traffic will come on the north-south access. I assume that a major proportion will do so, but what figure is being ascribed in the calculations that lie behind the Bill?

What proportion of passengers will come by rail from Liverpool street to Stansted airport? I presume that such calculations will take into account that the high proportion of passengers who use the refurbished line to Gatwick has started to decline. I understand that it rose at one stage to over 50 per cent. On evidence that I received recently from the British Airports Authority on a visit to Gatwick, it appears that the figure has declined to 40 per cent. What would be the figure for Stansted? Could it be a reliable figure, bearing in mind that there seems to be some fluctuation in rail usage to the only other London airport with a surface rail link?

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State says that there must be a 7 per cent. rate of return on capital invested. If his test is to be satisfied, by what year does that return have to be achieved? Presumably a 7 per cent. rate of return will not be achieved by 1991. By that stage the terminal would be barely open. The latest estimate of the British Airports Authority is that by 1991 throughput at Stansted using the existing facilities, which will be in use until the new terminal is opened, will be about 2 million passengers per annum. At what stage does the 7 per cent. rate of return have to be achieved?

Cost calculations must take into account the number of trains that are to run. The House will have noted that the quotation that I used from the working party's report excluded such matters as rolling stock. I must ask for information about the frequency of the service that is to be provided. That is necessary if we are to arrive at any judgment on the calculations that lie behind the scheme.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The line will extend to Stansted and it will be on a north-south access. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the usage projections are over-estimated? Many passengers will not want to come into London only to travel out of the capital for such a long distance northwards. It is likely that fewer passengers will use the line than British Rail or the Department of Transport have estimated.

Mr. Haselhurst: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for amplifying what I said about the hinterland being a source of passengers. Passengers may well come from the north, using the M11 and the A604 connection to the A1. They will make the calculation to which the hon. Gentleman has referred and reach the judgment that to enter London and travel out of it so far is not an attractive way of making their journey.

One of the first publications that the BAA issued in my constituency prior to the public inquiry referred to Stansted attracting traffic from the midlands and the north. I am sure that that factor is behind British Rail's plans. I am confident that it envisages the link as a spur that will go to Cambridge as well as to London. We know that cross-country services on the British Rail network are not especially good, but British Rail might envisage electrified connections at some stage with the east coast main line, which will bring services through Cambridge into Stansted. That may be a gleam in its eye. That is mere speculation on my part because there is no evidence of that as we consider the Bill.

I am concerned about the costs that are involved in running the trains that will be put on the proposed service. Part of the attraction of the Gatwick service has been the quality of the rolling stock that has been applied to it, which is of superior British Rail standard. I do not believe from what I hear that a similar standard of provision will be made on the Stansted route. I have not had wind of any new rolling stock coming on to the Liverpool street sector

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of British Rail, notwithstanding the present electrification project or the Stansted project. I have a nasty feeling that the rolling stock and the locomotives will be hand-me-downs from other regions. That may have a beneficial effect on costings, but we are entitled to know the quality of the rail link that we are being offered and being asked to approve.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) has said in seated interjections, we do not know the price that will be charged for using the service. That factor must have an effect on the rate of return and the speed with which the desired rate is achieved. Another factor is the competition that British Rail will face. It is likely that there will be fast coach services. Under the beneficent rule of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, coach travel has become easier and faster. The competition from coach operators might have a considerable effect on the number of passengers who want to travel by train to Stansted.

An even more difficult factor to evaluate is the way in which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will use the powers that are sought in the Airports Bill, which is now being considered in Standing Committee, to direct traffic to Stansted. That must be a crucial element in British Rail's calculations in putting forward the scheme that we are considering. What is in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State? Will my hon. Friend the Minister of State tell us how the powers will be used? We have not heard anything about that during the Committee proceedings. How can we make a judgment on the efficacy and attractiveness of the scheme that is being put before us unless we know exactly what my right hon. Friend intends? Have there been conversations behind the scenes? Have there been nudges and winks to British Rail about the degree of traffic that will be diverted deliberately to Stansted under the powers that my right hon. Friend is taking? These are matters about which the House should know. They will obviously have a crucial bearing upon our consideration of the Bill.

If we are to make a judgment on the Bill, we are entitled to a great deal more information about the cost of the scheme and the calculations that are being made to arrive at it. If British Rail says in its defence that these are matters of commercial confidentiality, I understand that there may be aspects of its operations that it has good reason in all fairness to keep confidential, but it is a public corporation and it is seeking the permission of the House to expend moneys in a particular direction. Therefore, it behoves it to present the full facts so that we may ascertain whether they are worthy of our confidence.

The railway line between Liverpool street and Cambridge is not good. I hope that I am not being disrespectful when I say that one's rank in life is no bar to experiencing major inconvenience on that line. When I was pleading with my hon. Friend's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Sir R. Eyre), in 1983 for the electrification of the Liverpool street-Cambridge line I had occasion to refer to the Lea valley line. I said it was

"the worst line running out of London under the auspices of British Rail. It suffers from what is known within British Rail as the cascade effect, in that someone in the imperfect world in which we live has to be at the bottom of the heap. That tends to be the Liverpool Street operation of British Rail's Eastern region, and within that operation it is the Lea valley line that gets the oldest locomotives and the oldest rolling stock.

Over the years there has been a dreadful record of breakdown and delay, usually accompanied by rational explanation at the time. The journey from Audley End to Liverpool Street is at best 52 minutes. The main train of the morning, which is heavily used by commuters with business appointments to keep, is frequently delayed, sometimes by as much as half an hour on a 52-minute journey."—[*Official Report*, 13 May 1983; Vol. 42, c. 1012.]

That is the sort of standard we have been expected to tolerate in the past. The standard is intolerable. The whole thrust of British Rail's efforts to deal with that bad standard was to reduce the number of trains on the line. It is important to appreciate that. In order to get over the inherent difficulties British Rail has been reducing the number of trains. The Bill asks us to sanction a substantial increase in the number of trains.

I am indebted to the service group manager of the eastern region of British Rail, Mr. Trevor Hill, for supplying some statistics about performance. He tells me that in 1982 some 66 per cent. of morning peak trains and 59 per cent. of evening peak trains to and from Cambridge arrived within five minutes of the scheduled time. By 1985 this had improved to 72 per cent. and 63 per cent. respectively. That is not saying that 72 per cent. and 63 per cent. of morning and evening trains arrive on time. It presumably means that a percentage of those arrive late, but only up to a maximum of five minutes late. In other words, 28 per cent. of trains were clearly more than five minutes late in the morning and 37 per cent. of trains were more than five minutes late in the evening. This has improved by a further small percentage in the last six months, but at the rate of improvement that we have seen over the past three and a half years, it will be another 13 years before all the trains are on time—or shall we say within five minutes of being on time. In a candid sentence Mr. Hill admits:

"There is clearly some way to go before the standards can be seen to be satisfactory, but I hope that I have demonstrated that we are moving in the right direction."

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): May I discourage my hon. Friend a little more? He talks about the ancient rolling stock he has to suffer. In my constituency we have the benefit of brand new rolling stock, but I am afraid that the trains run even less to time than was the case before.

Mr. Haselhurst: I visibly sag to hear that information from my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy). Perhaps I was naive enough to suppose that the grass was greener on the Great Eastern line, but clearly that is not so.

As British Rail is frank enough to admit, the standard of service on the Lea valley line is bad. Now we are told that it will be all right if British Rail is given permission to introduce a spur to the airport and put on extra trains and that it will manage somehow.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Without straying too far from the provisions of the Bill, could the hon. Gentleman give the House some solutions to the problem of chronically bad timekeeping on the Lea valley line?

Mr. Haselhurst: I hope that I can satisfy the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) by some of the remarks I intend to direct to that before I conclude my speech. British Rail has to come forward and offer

some explanation about how on earth it is to achieve a better standard of service. If it does not come up with a solution, what we shall get in comparison to the Gatwick flier is the Stansted stutterer because most of the trains seem to stop a number of times between the starting point and the end of the journey.

The House is being asked to approve what is virtually an absolute minimum service to the airport. We are not even told what the costs of that are to be. The Bill does not provide for an increase in the number of tracks on the Lea valley line south of the point where the airport spur reaches that line and through to Liverpool street. It does not provide for extra signalling schemes which might be necessary to give effect to British Rail's hope that it will be able to run an effective railway with an extra airport service operating on it. It does not provide for a terminal at St. Pancras, which was also considered as a possible option.

We are being offered the bare minimum, a skimped project, that will squeeze into the requirements of the Secretary of State to achieve a 7 per cent. rate of return. If British Rail had to include the dualling of the track, extra signalling and a proper, convenient terminal at St. Pancras, I would find it difficult to believe that the amount of money expended could possibly bring about the rate of return that the Secretary of State requires in relation to the likely throughput at Stansted. On what is proposed I do not even know what the likely expenditure will be.

Dr. Marek: If the timekeeping is as bad as the hon. Gentleman says—and I quite believe that it is, because it seems similar to my experiences on the London-Midland line—would it not be better for British Rail to invest capital, if it has any capital to invest, in the existing infrastructure in order to get the existing trains running on time? British Rail would be better advised to do that before starting to construct any more lines.

Mr. Haselhurst: The hon. Member for Wrexham makes a fair and relevant point. In fairness to British Rail and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, we are seeing electrification of the line. That will bring about an improvement. Electric rolling stock, even hand-me-downs from the north-west, will provide a better service and help improve punctuality, about which Mr. Hill supplied me with figures, to go on improving. It requires a great act of faith for us set our seal of approval on this Bill against that record of performance. We are being asked simply to accept the assurance of British Rail that it can increase the number of trains on the line, although it has not said in the context of this Bill exactly how many. We are asked to accept that everything will be all right on the day. One begs leave to doubt that.

Whether or not this rail link is right and will be a success can only be seen by trying to relate what is proposed with what is contained in the Airports Bill. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State seeks powers to regulate the distribution of air traffic within the London airport system. That will have a crucial bearing on the viability and operational effectiveness of a Stansted link. We must consider the type of traffic that will come to Stansted airport when judging its effect on the rail link. Will my right hon. Friend use his powers to direct more scheduled traffic to Stansted or will he use them to direct more charter traffic to Stansted? Charter and scheduled traffic have different patterns of operation, and those patterns will affect the time of day when passengers seek to get to the airport. We have not been given any evidence on the pattern of traffic using Stansted airport and, therefore, on the likely numbers to use the rail link to central London. Has British Rail been offered any such evidence?

What about the sheer volume of traffic which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will try to ensure uses Stansted airport? My right hon. Friend will not take a hands-off position, allowing traffic to determine its own level. He will be very much in the market place, but we do not know the criteria he will use in intervening. Those criteria are essential factors in assessing the effect of a rail link.

Mr. Bowen Wells: It has been rumoured that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends forcibly transferring all charter aircraft operations from Gatwick to Stansted. It is likely that many of the aircraft will come in late at night and early in the morning to reduce costs. Until now, British Rail has not operated during the small hours of the morning or late at night. I very much doubt that it would do so if it had the opportunity it seeks under the legislation.

Mr. Haselhurst: My hon. Friend has hit the point again. There is rumour and speculation about the Government's exact intentions. We do not know whether BR similarly has to guess about what is in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or whether my right hon. Friend has unburdened himself to BR in a way that he has not yet unburdened himself to the House.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. Friend agree that it goes further than that? The major carriers using Gatwick airport have made it clear that they do not want the bucket and spade trade at Gatwick airport, but that they want it to go to Stansted airport.

Mr. Haselhurst: I am trying scrupulously, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to keep within the terms of the Bill and nothing but the Bill. I do not want to venture too far down that lane. If we enter the realm of speculation about the possibilities of other countries which have a tight grip on air transport refusing to play the game that the Government wish them to play with respect to destinations in the London system, we shall be in for fun, and a great deal of difficulty. A terrible situation will develop and it will be difficult to calculate the effects.

Even if one tries to put that thought from one's mind, I think that we are still in a guessing game. I have heard no evidence to convince me that British Rail is not involved in that same guessing game. We are being asked to approve a measure that lacks substance. It is difficult for us to make a considered judgment on it.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State owes it to the House to state clearly what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to do with the considerable powers he requires to regulate civil aviation. This will enable us to draw conclusions on the usage of the rail link. My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest, who has represented British Rail in presenting the Bill, or British Rail at his behest must give the House considerably more information so that we can satisfy ourselves about what they seek to do. If we have a clear record of the evidence that has led them to conclude that the rail link is necessary, we can decide whether that link is in the interests of our constituents and the nation as a whole.

7.54 pm

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): I wish to oppose the Bill. I did not think that I would ever speak in opposition to a Bill that provided a basis on which British Rail could make investments, because I believe that investment by British Rail is important and I would normally wish to support such investment, but I must oppose this measure. The hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) posed a number of important questions that must be answered, but I do not think that the Minister of State will be able to answer them satisfactorily. I believe that we should consider costs, capital investment in the line and potential usage before we are asked to give the Bill a Second Reading.

My one connection with Stansted is the fact that I was born in the area, although I left it at a relatively young age. Last year I went to Stansted to speak at the ASTMS college. I used the railway link between Liverpool street and Stansted. Compared with many lines endured by the people in the north-west, this line is much better. British Rail's investment in the line, in meeting the Government's wish to develop Stansted as the third London airport—I do not believe that the Government have made a case for that—will be to the detriment of investment in other areas because of the financial restraints imposed on British Rail. I agree with the intervention forcefully made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) that money could be better used in other areas.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): Which investment proposition from British Rail are the Government preventing from going forward?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Gentleman surprises me. Only recently, in the past month, he turned down the electrification proposal for the railway line from Manchester to Blackpool. The Government should have approved that plan for that important tourist line, which needed development. Lancashire county council and the Greater Manchester council submitted a joint proposal to support that project, but the Government rejected it.

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman should know that British Rail did not put forward a proposition for the electrification of the line. It put forward a different proposition—to use sprinter trains on that route, which would run at approximately the same speed as trains on the electrified route, but at substantially better value for money. If British Rail did not put forward a proposition for electrification, how can the hon. Gentleman pretend that I have turned it down?

Mr. Pike: The Minister is not facing the facts. It may well have been that British Rail, knowing the financial constraints imposed by the Government, did not submit a proposal other than for sprinter trains. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that Lancashire county council and the Greater Manchester council submitted a case for electrification. If the Minister received a proposal from British Rail for electrification of that line, would he be prepared to support it?

Mr. Mitchell: If I were to receive a proposition for electrification from British Rail, I would look at it carefully and judge it on the normal criteria. In general, the hon. General will know that I have not found it necessary to turn down investment applications from British Rail.

If the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends on the councils concerned are prepared to finance the difference between British Rail's return on the cost of doing it with the fast sprinter and electrification, I am sure that British Rail would be interested to hear that proposition. I have not heard such a proposition. The hon. Gentleman is anxious to spend other people's money which they are not prepared to spend themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now straying from the Bill. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will come back to the Bill.

Mr. Pike: I shall return to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was saying that money should be used for those projects. I have no doubt that British Rail knows what financial constraints are placed upon it by the Government.

Dr. Marek: May I give one comparison between money that could be spent on the line that will be constructed for Stansted airport, if we pass the Bill, and on another project? I have in mind the singling of the Wrexham to Chester railway line. Money was not spent, and the line has been cut. Only last Thursday an inter-city train was over two hours late. I should have thought it would be far better, rather than spend the capital on the line to Stansted, to produce a proper service for a town with over 100,000 people. My hon. Friend knows that infrastructure cuts are about to be made in his locality. There must be countless examples up and down the United Kingdom. For example, a new bridge could be constructed on the line north of Inverness to Wick. There are many projects which are far more worthy for British Rail to undertake than this one.

Mr. Pike: I do not want to stray too far along that path, but it is true. The east Lancashire line from Burnley to its terminus at Colne or Chaffer's sidings in Nelson is also to be singled to save money under the financial restraints being placed on British Rail by the Government.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I wonder whether my hon. Friend would speculate on the position between British Rail and the Minister. Is it possible, when it comes to spending money under a Bill such as this or on a project such as the electrification of the Blackpool to Manchester line, that there is a ministerial nod and wink before anything is done? Does my hon. Friend believe that the Minister had not made his views known on this Bill or on the electrification of the Blackpool to Manchester line before British Rail made the decision?

Mr. Pike: I am sure that my hon. Friend's comments are absolutely right. The crux of the Bill, and the reason why I and some of my hon. Friends will oppose it, is that we believe that if the Bill were to receive its Second Reading it would be another widening of the economic imbalance between the regions of this country. I have no doubt that British Rail is aware of the Government's views. The Channel tunnel is a good example. It will involve major rail investment in the south-east.

Dr. Marek: It is important that the House realises that this investment is a matter of "either, or". It is a question of the development of the line to Stansted or of

developments elsewhere. It all has to be financed out of British Rail's capital investment, and that is subject to limits set by the Government.

Mr. Pike: That puts the point finely. We all recognise that British Rail has only a certain amount of money available for capital investment. If it invests in the Stansted line, it will not be able to invest elsewhere.

I do not criticise Mr. Speaker for not having selected the amendment, but it is unfortunate, because it would have focused attention on the parallel situation where a rail link is so essential to Manchester airport. I used to live close to the airport and Heald Green where the railway line passes.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I fully support the hon. Gentleman's complaint that the rail link into Manchester has not been proceeded with, although permission has been granted for it. Will he consider that, at some unfortunate time in the future, when I am not in the House and he might be Secretary of State for Transport, it will make sense to have the link into the airport so that the line can be constructed? That is the terrible mistake that we made at Heathrow. Here is the chance not to make a similar mistake. Why does not the hon. Gentleman back it?

Mr. Pike: The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) always makes valuable contributions on these matters. He has pointed out the difficulty with which we are faced tonight. It is with no pleasure that I oppose the Bill. I accept the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument that if the airport is to be developed—although I believe that that is the wrong decision—it is right to have the rail link connecting it.

I have to oppose the Bill because we know that the Government will not give British Rail the necessary capital to make the other important investments that we need in other parts of the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham was right when he said that it was either this or something else. If we allow the Bill to pass, something else will be ruled out. I assure the hon. Member for Isle of Wight that it is on that basis alone that I feel that I have to oppose the Bill.

I should like to be in the position where the Government were telling British Rail to come forward with its plans for investment anywhere in the country and they would see that sufficient resources were made available to develop the rail network, whether it be new lines, new rolling stock or anything else. I believe that we should be making such investment, because it is time that the country took more traffic from the roads and encouraged it to use the railway. To do that we need positive decisions from the Government to encourage people to use the railway for long-distance freight traffic and long-distance passenger traffic. We need to encourage the growth of British Rail.

The hon. Member for Saffron Walden said that we do not know what this line would cost. He mentioned £50 million or £55 million at 1980 prices, if I have the figures correct. We all know that the figure will now be considerably higher.

We accept the hon. Gentleman's comment that this proposal is a minimum option because the line does not link up with what would perhaps be the more appropriate terminus in London, St. Pancras—it merely has the spur at the Stansted end of the line—but runs to Liverpool street station.

The Government have failed to answer the problem of dealing with the people in the central London area. We believe that developing Stansted in the way that is proposed will attract increasing numbers to the south-east of the country to make their travel arrangements. I say "attract", but perhaps that is an understatement. I believe that the Bill will force people to travel through London and through one of the three London airports. That would be regrettable. We wish to see more development of regional airports so that people can travel from the regions.

If I wish to go to Manchester airport, I have tremendous difficulty in doing so. It takes me two hours to travel 24 miles from the north of Manchester to the centre of Manchester, and I then have to catch a bus to the airport. I cannot go that short distance on a direct train. I have to change at Blackburn, and in the middle of the day it takes almost two hours to do that relatively short journey. Yet here we are talking about improving facilities and taking a line directly into Stansted airport. I accept the point made by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight that this is necessary if the airport is to grow. I do not dispute for one moment that that is so.

The point that I have to make repeatedly is not my opposition in principle to the proposal, but my opposition to the use of British Rail's capital investment. I believe that this is not the No. 1 priority. That is why I feel that I have to oppose the proposal. There are many more important projects for which British Rail could use that money. It would be more to the benefit of the country as a whole if British Rail could do that. Again, the Government have a key role to play. We need to see the Government giving British Rail the ability to meet the requirement to improve the rail network throughout the country.

We do not know what the final growth of Stansted will be. The hon. Member for Saffron Walden hinted at the ways in which the Government intend to get traffic to use that airport. We also know that when the White Paper was discussed the Government said that they would actively encourage the growth of charter traffic at Luton. That is different from the wording used for the regional airports. They were told, "You are on your own. We do not mind your growing, but it is up to you to do it yourself."

It is assumed that there will be large amounts of charter and scheduled traffic. We need to know exactly what type of traffic the airport will get. We must ask at what time of day people will want to use the railway. British Rail might have to run a 24-hour service to the airport for charter flights. We all know that many charter flights are at early hours in the morning, to make the maximum use of the planes, at the cheapest possible price.

Dr. Marek: If Stansted is to be developed as a charter airport, where many of the flights will come in at 2, 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning, when those people get to London they will find that the first train out of Euston to Manchester is at 10 minutes to 7, for example. What will people do for two or three hours, in the early hours of the morning? I do not think that they will use that line.

Mr. Pike: As always, my hon. Friend makes a valid point. Those problems would have to be considered.

The Bill is premature. It has been too rushed and there needs to be a more detailed study of the implications. I hope that there will be second thoughts and that the Bill will be withdrawn to allow all those implications to be considered.

[Mr. Pike]

I believe in rail investment. Regrettably, I have to oppose the Bill on the basis that if money is available for investment now, other cases should come ahead of the improved rail link to Stansted. The case must be established much more clearly before we allow the Bill to be approved.

8.12 pm

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): At the beginning of the Bill we read:

"It is the duty of the Board . . . to provide railway services in Great Britain and, in connection with the provision of railway services, to provide such other services and facilities as appear to the Board to be expedient, and to have due regard, as respect all those railway and other services and facilities, to efficiency, economy and safety of operation:"

I should like to construct my speech round the words: "efficiency, economy and safety of operation:".

I start with efficiency. As my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) said, the original proposal was considered by the commission of inquiry set up by the Government to investigate the possibility of establishing an airport at Stansted, under Mr. Eyre QC, the chairman. The proposal put to the commission was a double track rail link, in other words, double the size of the track between Stansted and St. Pancras. That proposal contains no improvements whatsoever to the railway line between Bishop's Stortford and Liverpool street. Therefore, in the proposal we have substituted four lines for two and St. Pancras for Liverpool street.

It was conceivable that with four tracks one could run an efficient service from Stansted airport to St. Pancras without interfering with and making worse the line between Bishop's Stortford and London, which many of my constituents use daily to get to work. My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden described some of the indignities to which my constituents are subjected, through the appalling inefficiency and method of operation over which British Rail presides. I should have liked to invite you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to read my postbag on the subject. The letters come continually. I know that you have your own to look after, but I am sure that you would not like to read this postbag. My predecessor in the constituency, Lord Broxbourne, has had a similar experience over the years.

I understand that on the two-track line it is proposed to run four services an hour into Liverpool street from Stansted, in addition to the current load on the track which, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden, now has a low standard of efficiency.

We are asked to believe that we can run four more trains on the track from Stansted—so-called express trains, probably stopping at Tottenham Hale to connect with the London Regional Transport underground service on the Victoria line, and then going on into Liverpool street. I should like hon. Members to consider the possibility of doing that in view of British Rail's current performance. The service is not only inefficient but filthy, dirty and a disgrace to this country. On to the railway line, where we can expect services to be upwards of 10 minutes to half an hour late into Liverpool street, we shall put one of our most valued imports or exports, whichever way one looks at it—our important tourist traffic. We shall subject the tourists to the things that we have to put up with daily —the filth, dirt, inefficiency and unpunctuality.

In the proposal there is no provision for extra rolling stock, although we have been assured that rolling stock will be refurbished, which is presently running to the north-west and up the east coast main line. That will be fine for the airport passengers if the rolling stock is refurbished properly, but our experience on the line is that refurbished rolling stock and engines have a great propensity to break down.

If we need an example of that, I refer the House to the experience of Her Majesty the Queen on a recent voyage of exploration—certainly an adventure—from her home in Sandringham to Liverpool street. There is a catalogue of events. It was impossible to open the doors between the car where people were preparing her breakfast and the car in which she was sitting, so the train had to be stopped to let the person serving her get out on to the platform, go along it carrying the breakfast and then go into the Queen's dining car. That was the first stop. That train broke down five times on its journey from Sandringham to London and arrived two hours late at Liverpool street, having had two engine replacements. That illustrates the reliability of the stock that we are likely to have on the line. It will not be a good advertisement for tourists arriving at Stansted.

Mr. Hayes: My hon. Friend gave a good example of what happened to Her Majesty the Queen. Is he aware of the experience of another prominent member of the royal family, whom I shall not name, who sometimes uses that line, as I do? One evening she complained of noises in the next compartment — banging, scraping, grunts and groans. The ticket inspector went to the next compartment and found that the blinds were closed. He opened the door and found a naked couple, their bodies clothed only with a first-class ticket. It is disgraceful that members of the royal family should have to put up with that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that it is not in order to call in aid members of the royal family. Hon. Members are sailing close to the wind.

Mr. Wells: I thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) illustrated the serious condition of the service.

Mr. Snape: I want to make two brief points. If matters on that line are as bad as the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) imply, should they not turn up more often at Question Time and demand greater investment from their Government?

Secondly, and without going too far out of order, can the hon. Gentleman tell me what would be the necessary level of investment to prevent naked couples cavorting on the line? That appears to be less a job for British Rail and the Government and more a figment of the imagination of the hon. Member for Harlow.

Mr. Wells: I do not think that we should pursue figments. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that we have been pursuing the question of investment with my hon. Friend the Minister, and have had some success. We have persuaded the Government to electrify the line to Cambridge, which I trust will lead to an improvement in service. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden said, there will be hand-downs from the western region, which have deteriorated in reliability because the engines are so old. However, there has been investment on that line, due in part—not to put too high a value on it—to our representations and lobbying.

Mr. Snape: The hon. Gentleman cannot have done too well in view of the chapter of misery that he is describing.

Mr. Wells: I do not accept that criticism. We have been describing the existing service——

Mr. Snape: The Government have been in power for seven years.

Mr. Wells: Unfortunately, I cannot follow all the remarks made from a sedentary position.

Mr. Snape: Sit down then, and I shall make them from the Dispatch Box. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that he is singing a familiar, albeit boring, song? His Government have been in power for seven years. If they are ever to do anything about the deterioration in the railway service in his constituency and many other constituencies, they must cough up some money. The hon. Gentleman should turn up at Question Time—as he failed to do today—and demand that they do just that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We may have a fairly wide debate, but we cannot have a general discussion about investment.

Mr. Wells: I accept that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I want to put the record straight. I was here during transport questions today, as I often am, because overseas development questions immediately follow.

I want to discuss British Rail investment because, presumably, it will invest in the line and the rolling stock on it. We have been successful in persuading the Government to invest in British Rail, which has resulted in electrification of the line to Cambridge and to Norwich and of the east coast main line.

I must add a cautionary word about new rolling stock, such as that which we have experienced at Hertford north, and which is relevant to the debate. We must have new rolling stock to accommodate the tourists who will be laden with luggage and therefore requiring special facilities. I have great distrust of British Rail Engineering Ltd. and its capacity to produce a reliable train. The new rolling stock on the line in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) and my constituency is very welcome compared with what we had had hitherto, which was a variety of diesel-hauled trains of pre-war vintage that blew steam into the air, broke down and were dirty. However, having put in new stock we found that the brakes and compressors were inadequate, the doors and the air conditioning did not work, the motor was too small to provide a reliable service and the carriages could not be coupled and decoupled according to design. It is thoroughly unsatisfactory new rolling stock that has seriously inconvenienced the constituents of my hon. Friend and myself.

Mr. Murphy: Does my hon. Friend accept that whereas previously, with old rolling stock, the trains arrived late, with new rolling stock they simply do not arrive?

Mr. Wells: That is right. Indeed, the whole service was suspended for a number of weeks because of the dispute with the National Union of Railwaymen about single manning. That was caused by the inefficiency of British Rail and its inability to control its staff.

The question of staff relates to efficiency, and unless BR can recruit staff that is proud of their work, wear their uniforms properly, are polite to their passengers and are properly concerned about efficiency, reliability and the safety of their passengers, we will not be able to offer a service to tourists of which we can be proud. Unless the line is improved, we shall drive away tourists.

I have said a great deal about the current appalling service and the sort of service to which we look forward if BR is allowed to go ahead. The figures that BR has presented to the Minister have been seriously rigged. They were designed to persuade him that the rail link could be efficient, providing a 7 per cent. return on assets. Already the service has been reduced by going into Liverpool street rather than St. Pancras, and from four lines to continuing on the existing two lines. Although there will be improvements at Liverpool street, such as the lengthening of the station, the type of service anticipated will be minimal if it is to be within the forecast 7 per cent. return on assets.

We do not have any figures for rolling stock, and I understand that BR is not proposing to provide any. That means that it intends to put our tourists into trains quite unsuited to passengers with a considerable amount of luggage, who will have to suffer the filthy trains that I and my constituents suffer. That does not appear to be in the calculation, as other matters are also not in the calculation.

There are many manually operated level crossings, such as Sawbridgeworth, Stansted Abbots, Roydon and others down the line. These level crossings are a great danger to pedestrians and they hold up enormous amounts of traffic especially at Stansted Abbots and Sawbridgeworth. If the service goes ahead the level crossings will be down more than they are up to provide passengers with the additional trains from Stansted. There are no proposals to increase the efficiency of those level crossings or to build bridges over them. That is a matter of great concern for the people of Sawbridgeworth where British Rail had recently—as it calls it—modernised the line and the type of level crossing. The result is that blind people can blunder across and get mown down by a British Rail train as there is no physical barrier to stop them. This is a serious matter and my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow did assist me in getting a hooter installed which would sound and this has helped the problem. Nonetheless, it is a danger which will be exacerbated if the frequency of trains is increased.

British Rail has said that it will merely increase the frequency of the service to the level which existed before it reduced the service. It reduced the service to my constituents because it could not sustain railway efficiency and the reliability of the service. To increase reliability —not to a great extent, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden—it reduced the number of trains on the track. If we are to return to the frequency of the past we can obviously look forward to a further serious deterioration in the reliability of the service to Liverpool street.

This line is not signalled centrally from any one station. There are several different signal boxes up the line. The system could be modernised between London and Cambridge with the installation of one signal box at Liverpool street. This would require large investment. However, if this service is to have any possibility of running on time such a signalling system must be installed. If the same tracks are to be used for the increased frequency of trains, such a signalling system must be adopted. My hon. Friend the Minister must include the cost of signalling when he looks at the return on assets. If

[Mr. Wells]

the Minister does not do this, he will subject my constituents and the tourists from the airport to an extremely inefficient line.

The railway stations down the line are in a terrible state of deterioration. They are unpainted and filthy. The waiting rooms are full of graffiti and unheated. They are depressing and even dangerous places for women to find themselves in late at night because of the lack of staff care at the stations. The booking clerk at Hertford east station is absent most of the time and passengers are in danger of falling through the timber floors which are now full of dry rot. The beautiful prestige arches of the entrance are often totally deserted and from time to time bricks and tiles fall off the roof. The station at Ware has been improved after several years of lobbying—we were criticised for not lobbying by the Opposition. Ware station will be rebuilt and the same is true of Stansted Abbots. The railway station at Broxbourne, which is used by many of my constituents, is an absolute disgrace. It has a dangerous car park—full of heaps of coal. It is a draughty station at which the indicators do not work. The whole of the indicator system is totally outmoded and inefficient. The new indicator system installed on the Hertford north line does not work—British Rail has to get a new computer to make it work. Even with the installation of such modern equipment, one does not have much faith that British Rail will maintain it and that people will know which train they should get on. This will be especially difficult for tourists who cannot speak the language. Indeed my own constituents, who speak the language, still get on the wrong train because of the faulty indicators.

Dr. Marek: I really cannot allow the hon. Gentleman's comments to pass without saying that the answer to all this is to increase the number of staff of British Rail so that they could be present on the platform to give personal service and to ensure that tourists and strangers know exactly what is going on. I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman but there is an easy remedy.

Mr. Wells: I am not sure that British Rail is in control of its staff at railway stations. There are plenty of staff but at Hertford north most are found in the pub next door. If one manages to get the staff out of the pub and if they are coherent, they may be able to say what is happening on the line, that is if they know what is happening on the line. If one gets an answer one is lucky. It is not a question of additional staff but it is a question of motivation. The staff must be willing to give a proper service, keep the station clean and look after passengers.

I would like to sum up by considering the question of the return on assets.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. He has chronicled a sad story in relation to his local line. Can he tell me whether he has taken the matter up with British Rail and what answers he has received?

Mr. Wells: I have been continuously—indeed before I was elected — haunting those filthy, paint-peeling offices in Liverpool street and the offices at Kings Cross on these matters for the past 10 years. I am afraid I have achieved little. We got new rolling stock that did not work as well as the other incidents I have chronicled. I have been in touch with every area manager. I have arranged for speakers from British Rail to speak to the Rail User's Club to explain why the services are so bad. I did not bother with this this autumn because the rail service had totally finished on the Hertford north line. I thought it would be too embarrassing to ask British Rail officials to come to meet a number of my enraged constituents. I have been continuously in touch with British Rail but there is little it can do unless it has control of its staff, is more efficient and is determined to succeed. All of these ingredients are absent from the present line.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows Liverpool street station. I think it is one of the filthiest railway terminals in London, if not in the whole country. The toilets on that station are indescribable. This is the place in which we will land a large number of tourists. I direct the Minister's attention to Tottenham Hale, the station at which the train from Stansted will stop. Can one imagine carrying heavy baggage down the endless steps at that station into the underground? It is ludicrous and this rail link will not work in the way that British Rail has proposed to the Minister.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to accept an invitation from me to come on this line and travel from Liverpool street perhaps at 5.30 pm one evening. He can then experience the delays and listen to the remarks of my constituents about the line and the way it operates. I hope that the Minister will be fortified because my constituents have reached the stage of enragement, when they are not polite about the matter.

Mr. David Mitchell: I would be very happy to do so. It is always my intention and part of my work to keep in touch with the service that is provided. I and the management would like to know more about the conditions my hon. Friend has talked about.

Mr. Wells: My hon. Friend is being sold a pup. The line cannot operate efficiently without taking into account the cost of new signalling and rolling stock, the repair of stations, indicators and track, and the traction engines. At present there are at least three forms of traction engine on that line, all running at different speeds. One of them is designed to be an express train. When they are stopped, as they are, they overheat and have to be taken out of service. That problem is quite apart from that caused by the breakdown of the diesel motors, which the Queen experienced and to which I have referred, and will quickly pass over in view of your direction, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I have spoken of the inefficiency of the service and I need say no more beyond hoping that I will have the opportunity to show my hon. Friend how appalling it is. Instead, let me deal with Manchester, Heathrow and Gatwick. Before I am ruled out of order, let me say that it is relevant because the rail link will encourage passengers to use Stansted instead of Manchester. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) will be able to enlighten the House still further on this. That is what the British Airports Authority has in mind, as does British Rail.

The Gatwick to Victoria line has made British Rail a lot of money and it has encouraged it to go in for the Stansted link. However, I cannot understand why British Rail is so enthusiastic about building a railway line to Stansted which will probably have fewer than 8 million passengers per annum by 1995 and yet it refuses to put proposals before my hon. Friend the Minister to build a

line to Heathrow, which is seriously needed because of the congestion on the roads in west London, which all hon. Members will have had the misfortune to experience.

For some extraordinary reason British Rail refuses to put forward the proposal for a rail link to Heathrow, yet it is essential for our tourist traffic and the efficient running of London. Nor do we have such a proposal for Manchester. My hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) has obtained the planning permission but British Rail will not put forward the proposal. The reason is that the Department of Transport is determined, as it always has been, to develop a huge and unnecessary airport at Stansted. I shall not go into the pros and cons of that because we have had a debate on it and opposition to that has been defeated. None the less, this is a clear attempt to try to divert traffic from Gatwick, Manchester and other northern airports into Stansted in order to build up its throughput quickly so that the BAA can get a return on its investment as quickly as possible and conform with what have been described as transparent transactions between the London airports, which will probably be so transparent as to be invisible to the naked eye or to anybody else who is curious about how Stansted will be made to pay. I shall leave my hon. Friend the Member for Withington to elaborate on the inequities of the problem of Manchester.

Then there is the problem of the agricultural viability of the land which will be bifurcated by the two lines, one from Cambridge into Stansted and one from Stansted on to the main line. There are serious environmental consequences for my constituents who enjoy using the footpaths and the beautiful countryside which will be destroyed. Woodland and the Tye Green Brook valley will be destroyed by the line.

The line is destined to be a disgrace to Britain unless we make the investment necessary to make it run properly and efficiently. That means efficient rolling stock, the cleaning up of the railway stations, the cleaning up and greater efficiency of Liverpool street and proper modern signalling. If those are provided we might have an efficient service for the commuter, which is desperately needed, and for the additional tourist traffic that will be generated. On British Rail's present proposal there is no way in which that will be achieved. My hon. Friend will live to regret the day that he ever approved the line because of the stream of complaints from tourists and their consequent decline in numbers on this miserable, dirty and inefficient railway line.

8.45 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) discussed filthy toilets, naked people cavorting, drunken staff and so on, and I was a little surprised to hear him mention Manchester in passing. It is the real fear of what could happen not only to Manchester but to other regional airports that brings me here to oppose the Bill tonight. As has been said, it is regrettable that we have to do that.

The hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) tried to say that the Bill would not be unfair to Manchester, but he failed to allay our fears that it could have repercussions for the regional airports. The hon. Gentleman is shaking his head and we have had the same argument in the past.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman heard me, but I said that in 1984 we had an exactly comparable Bill which provided the same facilities for a link with Manchester. Such Bills are not designed suddenly to sanction the building; they are taking powers to enable the board to build when the finance is available. Manchester already has that facility.

Mr. Litherland: We might ask when, because to us it does not seem to be forthcoming. That does not allay our fears or convince us that the effect on Manchester or the regional airports will not be disastrous. We do have doubts and reservations.

Dr. Marek: If the Bill is enacted, British Rail will have the possibility of doing both or neither. In practice it will do one because it wants to build the line to Stansted, not to Manchester. That is why many hon. Members are opposing the Bill tonight. It is a question of either/or, and if we allow this one, Manchester will not get its rail link.

Mr. Litherland: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. That is what we are arguing about. We are going into uncharted waters. Those of us who live north of Watford know the depression in the north-west and in the north of England and cannot take any chances. It is regrettable but we must oppose the Bill because we still have doubts and reservations. The Bill is a sign that Stansted is to be developed to the detriment of Manchester and other airports, and we cannot get away from that.

The Standing Committee debating the Airports Bill has a consistent theme — Stansted. That is our greatest worry. That theme has continued since Second Reading. We fear that Stansted could be extended and developed at the expense of regional airports, especially Manchester international airport. This Bill fans the flames of our fear that the development at Stansted will proceed by stealth. On the Manchester proposal for a rail link we were informed in the White Paper:

> "The Government will consider the project on the same terms as the rail link to Stansted and will be glad to approve the investment if it is justified."

Therefore, Manchester believes that the Secretary of State should publish the Stansted submission, so that the House can be satisfied about the viability of the proposals. The Secretary of State should receive and publish the submission on the Manchester link, so that the House can be satisfied that both submissions will be determined on equal terms. All that we have been asking is that we should be able to compete with other airports on the same terms. We believe that the rail link and the infrastructure around Stansted will be detrimental to the north of England.

The viability of such investment is suspect. It has been assumed that Stansted could accommodate about 4 million passengers in the year 1988 and up to 15 million passengers in 1992. It took Gatwick 22 years to reach 9 million passengers. It has been assumed that the rail share of the airport traffic will be 40 per cent., and that a high proportion of passengers using the link will originate in the regions outside the south-east. On the original, dedicated link we discussed an estimated cost of £166 million and whether that cost could be financially justified. British Rail has confirmed that subsidy would be required for some considerable time and that is our worry. We believe that it would be an unfair and hidden subsidy.

Following the Government's decision to limit grant at Stansted to about 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum, it took British Rail and the BAA only a few months to submit proposals to the Government—details

[Mr. Litherland]

of which the Secretary of State has refused to make public. However, it is understood that the link relates solely to the rail spur and that the dedicated link will not be pursued for the time being.

British Rail and the BAA lost no time in submitting their proposals for investment and the Secretary of State has played his cards—as many Conservative Members have said—very close to his chest in providing details of the proposals. We believe that the cost of those proposals would be about £45 million to £50 million. It is also understood that British rail is satisfied that the project is viable, but that has not been proved during the debate. The assessment is made on the basis of traffic figures compiled by the BAA and a "modal split" produced by British Rail. Traffic build-up figures are unknown. It is clear that much traffic will be required and that the BAA must have made assumptions about that, which we believe are likely to be optimistic.

It has been assumed that all American charter traffic will be transferred to Stansted. There has been a failure to recognise the fact that Manchester will be competing for that traffic. Yet it is supposed to be Government policy to disperse tourist activities to the regions. If Manchester airport is to cater successfully, it is important that access of all modes of transport is improved. The rail link is the natural step for the development of Manchester airport, given its international gateway status. It is important that the airport can exploit the potential of its catchment area of Scotland, Yorkshire and the midlands and that the airport can compete effectively for incoming tourist traffic, especially long-haul traffic.

British Rail's work on the viability of the Manchester link is proceeding, but progress is slow. British Rail is assessing the link not on the basis that Manchester is a gateway airport, but on the basis that it is a regional airport. That is a misnomer and a fallacy that arises in all the arguments about regional airports compared with London airports. Manchester is a hub airport and is recognised by the Government as being a gateway airport.

In 1981 in the town hall in Manchester we set up a northern consortium, because of our fear—it has been called a paranoic fear—regarding the north of England and the south-east of England. Different complexions of political input were expressed by the trade unions, local authorities, north-west authorities, northern authorities, north-east authorities, chambers of commerce, chambers of trade and by other regional airports that are complementary to Manchester. The tourist organisations contributed to our claims that Stansted will affect Manchester. There was tremendous enthusiasm at the meeting and the single thread was the importance of regional airports to the north. We are frightened about the great divide between the north and south, the predominance of the south-east and the fact that we are becoming a country of two nations, which has been expressed time and again.

We recognise that any growth of Stansted will widen the gap of the social and economic differences that prevail between the north and the south-east of England. Nothing that has been said tonight has allayed the real fear of the further extension by stealth. The full extension and development of Stansted would be catastrophic to the region. Everything appears to be going the way of the south-east of England, including the new road infrastructure.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he would publish the list that he had received of highway improvement schemes from Hertfordshire and Essex county councils relating to the expansion of Stansted airport, together with the estimated cost, when they were available to him, and if he would indicate his response to the request that those schemes would be funded by additional capital allocations to the councils concerned. The Secretary of State replied that Hertfordshire and Essex councils were proposing roads and infrastructure to the tune of £38 million. The Minister referred to a sum of £2 million. The Secretary of State then stated that he was willing to meet representatives of both councils to discuss those and other proposals. He said that he would not speculate on the outcome and continued:

"We shall take into account any proposals for capital expenditure on local roads when the Councils submit their Transport Policies and Programmes for future years." — [*Official Report*, 10 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. *313-4*.]

Once again the Secretary of State is playing his cards close to his chest.

With the investment in new roads, new towns, the Channel tunnel and the progressive extension of Stansted, there is a rosy future for the south-east, but not for the north and north-west, especially the construction industry there. The north has seen a massive decline in its manufacturing industry, ports and coalfields. It has little going for it. In my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) male unemployment stands at about 60 per cent. Manchester airport is not a panacea to all those ills, but if it declines our area will be dramatically affected.

As manufacturing has declined, we have tried to promote tourism, but the Bill will affect tourism in the north-west. As Manchester airport continues to develop as an alternative hub airport with a wide range of frequent services, it will compete increasingly with the London airports for a large proportion of regional traffic. It is already relevant that the London airports compete fairly with Manchester airport, but it will become more significant in future. We are merely asking for fair competition. The hidden heavy subsidy for Stansted will certainly affect Manchester

A point which is often ignored in aviation debates is that about 10 million incoming foreign passengers are forced to use London airports. That element of demand is forecast to increase significantly in the years ahead, and will represent an increasingly high proportion of future London traffic. At present London accounts for more than 90 per cent. of incoming tourists who travel to the United Kingdom by air. In future the figure will at least remain static. Many of those tourists have no choice but to travel to London. They do not all want to travel to London and, indeed, 40 per cent. of all their nights are spent outside the south-east. That is because it is Government policy to promote solely London's interests abroad. A further reason is the Government's failure to realise that the structure of the nation's tourist industry is unsuitable for the job in hand.

All the tourist attractions advertised abroad are centred on London. The heritage trail starts in London and the south-east, goes to the Cotswolds, and then to Stratford

to experience Shakespeare. Tourism should be spread to the north-west which has a great deal to offer. There is the beauty of the lake district, the Yorkshire dales, Derbyshire and Cheshire. Moreover, Scotland, Wales and the north of England are becoming increasingly attractive to tourists. Local authorities and other agencies are making considerable efforts to capitalise on existing attractions and to develop new ones. Manchester is sending our representatives to do a public relations job abroad, in America in particular, to tell people that the north-west has much to offer, whether it be the Beamish open air museum, the Maryport Harbour development, the north Pennines tourism growth point, the Merseyside maritime——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying now. He was in order when he was talking about the provisions in the Bill. He must relate his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. Litherland: I accept your ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to make comparisons between what we have to offer and how the Bill will affect us, whether in tourism, hotel occupancy or anything else.

The former chairman of the British Tourist Association, Sir Henry Marking, said:

"If, as the people of London and of many places in the South of England will readily affirm, London is already full, perhaps overfull, with tourists for most of the year, and if tourism earnings are to grow, visitors must be encouraged to visit increasingly the splendidly attractive places in England, Wales and Scotland. Use of a Northern Gateway would help to ensure this and would spread more evenly throughout Britain the tourist traffic and prosperity and employment which tourist traffic brings in its wake."

This is our argument. Any extension of the infrastructure, whether in road, rail links or airports, will have an effect on what we see as the saving grace in the north-west, the service industry, which is standing in in place of the massive decline in manufacturing. We shall raise our voices against anything that might have repercussions against our tourism sector.

What is required is a change of direction in Government policy of the kind clearly identified in the recent report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, "Promotion of the Regions Abroad". It recommends a simplified structure for promoting tourism. The development of what we described as an open jaws policy, whereby one end of the journey is through the London airport system, is not acceptable to the north-west. We see the rail link as apart of that system. We shall oppose the Bill because it will be detrimental to Manchester airport and the regions.

9.8 pm

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I should this evening have been joining some colleagues in Hong Kong, where the opening of the new British Airways scheduled service between Manchester and Hong Kong is being celebrated. My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), who have continued on the journey, wish to be associated with what I shall say.

I feel that it is important to be here to speak against the Bill, not because I think that it should not eventually receive a Second Reading, but because I think that it should not receive a Second Reading tonight. It is important that we should understand why. The process of a private Bill—I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) to this—involves negotiation between those who object to the Bill and the promoters. In this instance, British Rail has not pursued that process with anything like the vigour that it should have done.

There are two essential ingredients to the problem in the north-east for those who speak on the Manchester beat. First, we are asked to approve a rail development in the south-east for which there is inadequate information and the calculations for which have been withheld from public view. The first demand was for the information upon which the Bill is based to be made public. That has not happened. Secondly, the Bill is based on a clear statement of Government policy, which was that the two rail links should be considered on an equal basis and that they should be analysed and presented to the Government for a decision on an equal basis. That has not happened, either.

British Rail has produced figures which show that it regards the extension to Stansted as a business opportunity and that it is based upon greatly optimistic interpretations of Government policy. However, British Rail has been dragging its feet in Manchester. It has put forward a number of obstacles and has not managed to get even to the starting gate. British Rail ought to be asked why the Secretary of State for Transport has had its proposals for Stansted on his desk since November 1985, although he will be lucky if he receives its proposals for Manchester by May 1986.

Mr. Bowen Wells: Reference has been made to the White Paper, "Airports Policy", Cmnd. 9542. There is also the Government's undertaking about Heathrow. The White Paper says:

"The Government has therefore decided to commission urgently a study of the options for improving surface access to Heathrow: by easing the capacity problems of the A4-M4 corridor; the possibility of a BR link to Heathrow; and the scope for improvements to the Piccadilly line underground service."

None of those proposals is yet before the Minister, yet the Stansted proposal is in front of him.

Mr. Silvester: Yes. I understand that that is even further down the track. Equality seems to be a very malleable substance. British Rail does not deserve the Bill, and I hope that it will not get it. Whether British Rail gets it later depends on how it proceeds. The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), who has now left the Chamber, passionately asked the House to back the Bill. However, we should not back it tonight because the basis for backing it does not exist, although it may be provided at a later stage.

The basis of the Government's policy is clear. An agreement was reached last year. It was understood that there would be equality of treatment in respect of the rail link, that there would be no subsidy for the operation at Stansted and that there would be no direction of traffic to Stansted. Without that agreement there is no basis for putting at risk all the people who will be affected by the Bill. The British Railways Act 1984 was passed on the basis of everybody, apart from one major objector, being willing to accept it. They were anxious for a rail link. Local resistance to the development of the link was minimal. The Stansted Bill involves substantial powers of compulsory purchase. It is not greeted with universal applause. Therefore, to quote one Bill as justification for another is absurd.

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson: It is obvious that my hon. Friend has but slight knowledge of private Bills. All private Bills have petitions against them, and all of them are considered in detail. I assure him that the 1984 Bill was considered in detail, too.

Mr. Silvester: My hon. Friend is undoubtedly right that all Bills of this kind attract petitions against them. One has to make a judgment about the importance of the local opposition. However, I doubt whether he would find it tenable to express the view either in Manchester or in the Stansted area that the opposition in Manchester is not very much weaker than that which he will find in the Stansted area. An interesting feature of the Bill is that it involves a rail spur from the main line into the airport, continuing otherwise with the existing infrastructure. This was option B presented to the Eyre report which had some rude things to say about it.

Chapter 16, paragraph 5.20 of that report said:

"The BRB made it plain that Options A, B and D were opposed. BRB went so far as to indicate that the mere construction of a rail link without additional infrastructure as contemplated by Option B would be worse in operational terms than no spur at all. . . . Other users of the existing services to and from Liverpool Street could be adversely affected if Option B were adopted."

Suddenly all that is gone. Suddenly this horror of option B has disappeared. The reason is clear. British Rail and the British Airports Authority were faced with the decision that they were able to get out of the House — the development to 8 million passengers per year and not to 15 million, rising to 25 million, as originally contemplated.

So British Rail now proposes to include in the proposals for the Stansted link generous assumptions — for example, that the proportion likely to use the line to travel to Stansted will be 30 per cent. of airport traffic or more. The equivalent figure for the Manchester link is said to be about 6 per cent. No one suggests that we would reach the 30 or 40 per cent. figure—which comes from Gatwick —but Manchester will certainly reach between 10 and 12 per cent.

The differences in calculation show a remarkable dragging of the feet. I have a summary or preliminary appraisal of the proposed link with Manchester international airport in which a number of possible options are considered. One says that there should be no action, but that which is most favoured says that the link will produce a negative value of £14 million and a discounted infrastructure cost of £22 million. That is based upon the assumption that the rail link to Manchester would go from Piccadilly and not involve the original loop. I shall not go into detail, because we are talking about Stansted. The route would go from Manchester to Wilmslow and utilise only the Blackpool and Liverpool services.

What British Rail has to say about another option is interesting because it would carry the trans-Pennine trains through to Manchester airport—the obvious thing to do. However, British Rail says that it must take into account "the diversion revenue penalties". In other words, because of its plans for the trans-Pennine link between Yorkshire and Liverpool, it is deducting the benefits to the airport because it says that it would lose revenue from traffic that would otherwise go on to Liverpool.

We are faced with a simple proposition on which the honour of the Government and the integrity of British Rail are at stake. I make no bones about it. Whatever is said in public, there is no doubt in my mind that we were clearly to understand, both here and in Manchester, that the link to Manchester airport and the link to Stansted would be considered simultaneously with the same vigour and determination and on the same basis, with the same commercial criteria being applied. That promise has not been fulfilled. The indications are that that promise is not to be fulfilled. The Minister is a kind man and he shakes his head, but until he can assure me that a British Rail proposal is on his desk I shall take a lot of convincing.

The costing is quite awry. The latest proposals, which have been worked out by the Manchester airports authority, show that, including the trans-Pennine interchange, which BR leaves out, the revenue estimate is close to the original estimate put out by BR's consultants. Those consultants have shown the Manchester link to be a viable proposition, but BR has nibbled away at it like rats in the hay to ensure that it is not.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State shakes his head. I am glad to see that, but I should be much happier if, when he stops shaking his head and rises to reply, he could give me a clear assurance that the proposal is on its way and that the basis of calculation includes a realistic appraisal of bringing traffic into Manchester airport from the whole of the north of England. That is the essential ingredient on which the whole of this agreement was based. I urge him to take the matter extremely seriously.

9.26 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I do not intend to detain the House for more than a few minutes as the debate has illustrated opposed private business with a vengeance. With the exception of the hon. Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson), every right hon. and hon. Member has been hostile to the Bill, to say the least. The reason is not hard to find.

The hon. Member for New Forest said that there is no connection between the railway line that the Bill proposes for Stansted and that approved in 1984, when he and I were present, for the railway line to Manchester airport. I accept that the hon. Gentleman believes that there is no connection but, regrettably from his point of view and, perhaps, from British Rail's point of view, nobody else does. Certainly no hon. Member who has participated today believes it. There is a strong feeling that there is an imbalance of treatment as between Stansted and Manchester. Stansted is presumably being made more attractive in the run-up to the privatisation of the British Airports Authority, and other airports are being left to fend for themselves.

The official BR view is that the two projects should be considered on exactly the same terms and that, presumably, decisions will be made accordingly. The same view was expressed in the White Paper. The Government have not exactly come clean, however. In reply to a written question from me and in reply to questions asked by other right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Secretary of State has covered himself with the cloak of commercial confidentiality in regard to the rail link to Stansted airport. None of us understand that. The criteria for such projects have always been fairly widely published previously. It has always been clear on which criteria such schemes have been judged. That is not so here — there is evidently some commercial confidentiality.

The hon. Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) talked about the necessary 7 per cent. rate of return. He understandably asked about such costs as the tunnel under the runway, signalling and station buildings. He made a plea, which was echoed by some of his hon. Friends, that if and when the Bill goes through, if and when the line is built and if and when the trains are introduced, they will, unlike most trains on the line, run to time. The hon. Member for Saffron Walden said that the Secretary of State would intervene to make the airport a success. One can understand the unwillingness of all hon. Members to believe the Government when they say that they will operate the same hands-off approach on this project as they have operated on others.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) said, the criteria for not putting forward the Blackpool electrification was rather confusing. I understand my hon. Friend's confusion, which was mirrored throughout the north-west. I saw newspaper reports which said that the Department of Transport had rejected British Rail's application.

Mr. David Mitchell: No; it did not.

Mr. Snape: I accept what the Minister of State says, but I must tell him that the *Manchester Evening News* reported that the Department of Transport had rejected the application. Whether or not it was rejected—and if the Minister of State says that it was never put to him, then we must accept that — the Opposition would doubt whether the same criteria would apply to that scheme as applied to the railway line into Stansted.

The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) had some harsh words to say about the line and the way that it is operated at present. Filthy, dirty and inefficient were just three of the epithets he awarded to the present system. He criticised virtually everybody. He criticised British Rail Engineering Limited for what he said was faulty train design. British Rail Engineering Limited has been building these trains for many years. It normally builds them to the specification of the region placing the order. Presumably it did that in connection with the eastern region rolling stock which is used on the line which the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford mentioned.

The hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford and some of his hon. Friends complained about the frequency of service in the existing system and questioned whether the line would be able to cope. The hon. Gentleman said the line could not cope now, and that is before any additional trains enter service. It is not for me to defend British Rail's senior management. I must confess that, having spent some years working in the industry, I have no great faith in it. In my customary attempt to be fair, however, I must point out that the management proposes to redevelop Liverpool street station and I presume that that redevelopment will include some degree of re-signalling which might go some way to easing some of the problems that the hon. Gentleman complained about.

If it is true, as the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford suggested, that staff were conspicuous by their absence—and he referred, without providing a shred of evidence, to people spending their time in pubs and not therefore being around to run the existing service—I must tell the hon. Gentleman that as one who is sponsored by the major railway union I hold no brief for that conduct. If that happens, that is a direct failure of management.

Whether or not the rail link is built, and although I disagree with much of what the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford said, I must admit that I travel on the railway frequently, as the hon. Gentleman no doubt does. I must say that railway management is conspicuous by its absence after six o'clock in the evening, particularly at weekends. So long as uniformed supervisory staff is withdrawn and replaced by administrators in tower blocks at major administrative centres, the decline in railway services to which the hon. Gentleman referred is likely to continue. Indeed, whether or not the rail link is built, we may well not see any great improvement in service standards unless the change to which the hon. Gentleman and I would be committed takes place.

Mr. Bowen Wells: The hon. Gentleman claimed that I have made certain statements without a shred of evidence to support them. I am not accustomed to doing that, especially when some of my constituents are railway employees. I would not want to cast aspersions on them unnecessarily. The fact is that I know that what I have said takes place. I happened to go to the bar at which railway staff were imbibing at a time when trains were not arriving at the station. It seemed a pleasant way to pass the time but it was not one which was consistent with their duties, as the hon. Gentleman has said.

Mr. Snape: I shall not be especially impressed by the hon. Gentleman's assertions unless he proves to be more of an expert on railway uniforms than he has proved to be on rolling stock and locomotives. Does he know whether those who he saw in the bar were on duty? Does he know their grades, and has he knowledge of what they are doing at any one time? If that which he describes takes place, I do not condone it. If it does, the railway management should take steps to prevent it happening. It seems from the questions of the Minister of State that the hon. Gentleman has not complained to Ministers, whoever else he has complained to over the years. Ministers are nominally responsible. That is evidenced by the Minister asking the hon. Gentleman what complaints he had made locally and regionally about the line.

I do not envy the task of the hon. Member for New Forest. Although he has not convinced anyone so far, he must seek to convince a majority of the House, even at this late hour, to support the Bill. I would find it a matter of personal regret if the House rejected any proposal to build a railway line. Far too many lines have been closed over the years. However, British Rail and the Government have failed palpably to make a reasonable case for any degree of investment priority to be given to the project that is set out in the Bill, especially if that priority were to be at the expense of more worthy projects in other parts of the country.

9.33 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): It may be helpful if at this stage I intervene to give a brief indication of the Government's view of the Bill. Before I go any further, I take up part of the speech of the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape). The hon. Gentleman spoke about the electrification of the line from Manchester to Blackpool and said that local newspapers carried a report that it had been rejected by the Government. If they did so, I hope that they will recognise that that report was a considerable

[Mr. David Mitchell]

distortion. I trust that they will print corrections and give them the same prominence as the original articles. British Rail is able to provide a service virtually as fast and as efficient, with its new sprinter rolling stock — and at lower cost — than that which has been provided by electrification. British Rail did not propose that the line should be electrified.

The Government have considered the contents of the Bill and have no objection in principle to the powers sought by the British Railways Board. Only one minor point has been raised in correspondence with the promoters and I have no reason to doubt that this will be cleared up satisfactorily.

The airports policy White Paper, Cmnd. 9542, which was debated and approved by the House last June, announced the Government's decisions on the case for developing Stansted airport. The BAA has been given outline planning permission for expansion of the airport to 15 million passengers per annum, but the first phase of the development is to be restricted to 7 million to 8 million passengers per annum. Expansion, if any, beyond that level will be subject to parliamentary approval.

Against that background, British Rail was invited to study, in consultation with the BAA, what rail link to Stansted would be financially justified in the light of the traffic forecasts and phasing proposals discussed in the White Paper. The White Paper made clear the Government's willingness to approve investment in a rail link to Stansted if it can be financially justified.

In response to the Government's invitation the railways board put forward an investment submission in November last year for a spur from the Liverpool street-Cambridge main line to a new railway station beneath the proposed new airport terminal building.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is at present considering the board's investment proposal. He is also considering proposals from the BAA for the first phase of the expansion of the airport submitted to him last October. He hopes to be able to announce decisions on both BAA and BR proposals before very long.

The Bill would give the railways board power to proceed with the construction of the link. If investment approval is given, its intention is that the link will be operational by the financial year 1990-91.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Mr. Haselhurst) asked me whether I am willing to be persuaded that a rail link would be for the general benefit of users. He then asked why there was nothing similar for Heathrow. The same issue was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells). The Government undertook in the White Paper to commission a study of the options for improving surface access to Heathrow, including the possibility of a BR rail link to the airport. A shortlist of consultants is being interviewed and an announcement about a commission can be expected shortly. I hope that will satisfy my hon. Friend.

Mr. Bowen Wells: May I ask my hon. Friend why it has taken so long to get to the stage of appointing a consultant when, as he says, British Rail had a proposition on his desk in November 1985? That is surely a quite unacceptable delay on the part of I do not know who.

Mr. Mitchell: There are considerable problems about Heathrow where one is dealing with the M4-M3 corridor. My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford knows that there is a long history of considering such opportunities in the past and then having them rejected. We are anxious to ensure that there is a full assessment of the wider opportunities to improve traffic within that corridor. My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden asked whether the provision of the railway would have an accelerating effect on the growth of passenger traffic at Stansted. I am advised that growth in demand at Stansted will result from facilities at Heathrow and Gatwick reaching capacity. It is generally recognised that that is the largest single factor. My hon. Friend also raised the financial case and I shall come back to that.

I should like to deal with the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Silvester) about the possibility of a rail link to Manchester airport. It has been suggested that before legislation is passed giving British Rail powers to construct a rail link to Stansted, further progress should be made over the Manchester airport link. The British Railways Board already has the necessary statutory powers under the British Railways Act 1984 to construct a rail link to Manchester airport. Following last year's airport policy White Paper, the local authorities, the airport authority and British Rail were invited to analyse the case for providing a direct link to Manchester airport.

The White Paper made it clear that the Government will consider the Manchester project on the same terms as the rail link to Stansted airport. In the case of Stansted, we have an investment submission. In the case of Manchester, as yet no submission has come forward but I can assure the House that the Manchester rail link scheme will be considered in no less favourable terms than the Stansted one. The criteria will be no less favourable for the consideration of the Manchester investment project.

Mr. Silvester: Will my hon. Friend explain why it is that, although the submission for Stansted was on his right hon. Friend's desk in November, I am told by British Rail that the earliest we can expect a submission about Manchester is in May this year? Why is that regarded as equal treatment?

Mr. Mitchell: There are a number of additional complexities in the Manchester submission. In the case of Stansted there is one direct line from the airport to one major town destination. At Manchester there is a diversity of destinations, and work has to be done on assessing the destinations to which passengers go from Manchester airport, because they do not all go to Manchester. It is for that reason and for none of the reasons about which my hon. Friend has dark suspicions that there has been a delay in coming forward with the proposition.

My hon. Friend suggested that the House is being asked to approve a British Rail investment without sufficient information. He also said that the Stansted investment proposition will be considered on a more favourable basis than the proposed Manchester link. I assure my hon. Friend that the House is not being asked to consider a BR investment. That is a job for Ministers. I assure my hon. Friend that we shall consider no less favourably the criteria for Manchester than we consider those for Stansted. Naturally, I shall look carefully at his trans-Pennine point when we come to deal with it.

I am as anxious as my hon. Friend the Member for Withington, if a financially sound case exists for

Manchester, for it to be brought forward as quickly as possible, but the initiative lies with the local authorities and BR, and I can only urge them to press on together with their analyses.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden raised questions about the financial case and the suspicion that the link will be justified only if it carried more than 8 million passengers. The Bill provides statutory powers to undertake the scheme. Investment approval will be needed for the powers to be implemented. It is usual to obtain statutory approval first. The White Paper makes it clear that the link must be financially justified with the phasing set down in the White Paper — with 7 million to 8 million passengers. British Rail has submitted an investment proposal which we are considering.

My hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden then raised a series of questions on the viability of BR's proposed investment. This is a BR investment which the Government have called in for careful examination. This proposition has been with officials since November. They have sought clarification on a number of details. The proposition has just arrived on my desk, and I shall need to ask a number of further questions. I shall seek to deal with this in as businesslike a manner as I can, but I cannot say how soon I shall be able to recommend a decision to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Haselhurst: Will my hon. Friend offer some further guidance? Does he recall that consideration at departmental level of the proposal to electrify the line from Bishop's Stortford to Cambridge took several years? Will this rather more expensive scheme take a similar period?

Mr. Mitchell: If my hon. Friend refers to any investment proposition that has come from British Rail since I have had responsibility in this matter, I can only say that none of those proposals has been kept waiting for years. Indeed, some have been turned round in as short a time as three weeks. I would hesitate to think that I could turn this one round within that time scale.

I have been asked why it has not been possible for the Government to announce a decision on the British Railways Board's investment so far. A number of details have to be discussed with BR, and I have already referred to that point. The board will not be able to proceed with construction of the rail link without approval of the investment proposal but, as with any major scheme for new infrastructure, statutory powers are needed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford referred to services on his line. I repeat the assurance that I would accept an invitation from him to see them. My hon. Friend has raised this matter with BR management. The Government have given BR objectives, which include running attractive, clean and punctual services. My hon. Friend went on to say that he believed that the attraction of using this line may add to the attraction of using Stansted. I think that there is a certain incompatibility between those two parts of his speech.

The hon. Members for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and for Burnley (Mr. Pike) claimed that BR should spend its resources on other railway lines. That is a matter for the management of BR. In the case of Stansted, we shall not expect to subsidise the service. We shall expect BR to make a 7 per cent. return on its investment. If the hon. Members for Wrexham and for Burnley know of other investments that BR can make with a similar return, I hope that they will let the board know as soon as possible and copy their letters to me.

There are three petitions against the Bill and the petitioners will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Select Committee. I therefore recommend to the House that the Bill be given a Second Reading and be allowed to proceed in the usual way to Committee for detailed consideration. It is quite clear from what some hon. Members have said that there will be a great deal of detailed consideration and I believe that the House should allow the Bill to go forward in that way.

9.45 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): This has been a long and, for the most part, interesting debate. Obviously the overwhelming view of the House is that the Bill should not go ahead. Nothing that the Minister said has allayed the fears of those who have spoken. We are caught by a twin difficulty. One is British Rail's apparent near paranoia in refusing to develop a rail link to Manchester airport. Its refusal to develop that link rests on the fact that it is greatly concerned about the potential loss of traffic on the Manchester to London route. I and my hon. Friends feel that that fear is grossly misguided. The second difficulty is the desire of the Government to push ahead with the rail link to Stansted in order to make that airport viable far ahead of its time. That is part of their global airport policy, which is almost independent of the need for a direct rail link to Stansted.

I do not think that it is fanciful to suggest that at least partly in the Government's mind is the view that British Rail should fund the link to Stansted and that the link should be well on its way when the Government wish to flog off Stansted, thus increasing the airport's capital value. That is a significant point to which the House should address itself. Is it right that public money—the money British Rail spends is provided by the taxpayer —should be spent to develop and increase the asset base of the British Airports Authority so as to increase the price that the Government will obtain on privatisation? It would be unacceptable to hon. Members from northern constituencies if, in so doing, the Government directly jeopardised the future of Manchester airport and of a national airports policy.

It would also be unacceptable for the Government again to invest in infrastructure in one region when British Rail is constrained by the external financing limit imposed upon it by central Government. It is a simple fact that the money could not be spent on other schemes. For example, the Minister has commented about the charge in connection with the electrification of the Blackpool to Manchester line. I do not believe that there is no discussion between the Department of Transport and British Rail. I know that it was the Department of Transport, not BR, which sent out letters announcing the decision to Members of Parliament who were concerned about the issue. The Department of Transport was intimately concerned in that decision. This is not the time to explain the need for a fully electrified railway system in the north-west, linking it to the national railway system, for reasons of the local economy as well as for an efficient transportation system. However, because of a Government decision, one area of the north-west is being denied infrastructure investment while the south-east seems to have no problem persuading the Government to develop any scheme, whether it be the

[Mr. Tony Lloyd]

Channel tunnel, Stansted airport or rail links. The Government are persuaded that the development should go ahead in the region which is already the most prosperous and successful. That would be grossly unacceptable in the present circumstances.

The regional dimension is important. It is massively important that the nation should be brought together. The decision to develop a rail link to Stansted and enhance the capacity of that airport shows the Government's favour of Stansted airport at the expense of the rest of the airport system in Britain.

If Stansted is to develop, it will develop more quickly than any other airport in the history of the airports system. Were it to be developed, that would be directly at the expense of Manchester airport, but not just Manchester. Occasionally it is convenient for the Government to paint a picture showing that only Manchester would be affected. All the regional airports would be affected, such as Newcastle, Bristol and Birmingham and the Scottish airports, which want to develop, particularly in their charter traffic. Stansted would be looking for the charter traffic were it to move towards a throughput of 7 million or 8 million passengers each year. The charter traffic could make that possible. That traffic could come only if it were diverted from the other regional airports. The Government are saying to people from the regions that rather than having access to an airport system that serves the regions, they would have to travel via the south-east. They are doing that through their decision to develop Stansted.

The debate has touched on all the issues that affect the area round Manchester, but the fundamental issue that is at stake for Manchester and other areas is simply whether we are prepared, as a Parliament, to say to the Government, "We trust you to get ahead with the assessment of the scheme without reference to the House of Commons or the public." The Minister has made play of the fact that we already have a scheme, which has been discussed, not just for a year or two, but for many years, to link Manchester airport to the British Rail system. That scheme can be based not on provisional or estimated passenger throughputs, as is the case with Stansted, but on existing passenger traffic. We know the exact amount of traffic that Manchester now carries. Under that scheme, British Rail could put its estimates before the House of Commons and make that information available. We could easily come to our own assessments of the likelihood of the scheme's success or failure.

With Stansted, it is different. The scheme is much more fanciful. It depends greatly on projected traffic growth at Stansted, and that in turn depends greatly on Government decisions, such as to which airports they will allocate air traffic. Therefore, any decisions made by British Rail about Stansted are not decisions that it is capable of making independently of other actors in the drama. As British Rail, in its assessments, depends critically on decisions by the British Airports Authority and by the Government, it cannot seriously expect us to accept its own assessments of the viability of the Stansted scheme.

The minimum pre-condition, before Members of Parliament from the Manchester area can accept that the Bill should go forward, is that the calculation of the financing of Stansted and the passenger throughput that it involves is laid before us. Is the passenger throughput the 7 million or 8 million that the Government talk of? Is it at a cost of £45 million or £50 million, as we are led to believe? Is it different? We do not know. Without that information, it would be unacceptable for the House to allow British Rail to go ahead, when that would be at the expense of every other scheme in every other part of the country. It would be a decision in favour of that one successful region at the expense of all the other regions.

For those reasons, I hope that the Bill will not be passed. The time may come when we can support it, but the pre-condition of support will be that we see the development of other schemes, such as the rail link to Manchester.

9.54 pm

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): This proposal to construct a new railway will result in encouragement of the use of Stansted, which I cannot condone, given my constituency concerns. The proposal to construct the new railway may also result in less finance being available to overcome commuting problems in mid-Hertfordshire, including the building of a new railway station in Welham Green where—I declare an interest—I have my constituency home, in North Mymms.

Although I recognise the value and importance of the introduction of one-man operated trains, the words of the old BR advertising campaign, "Let the train take the strain" are no longer appropriate; it appears that it is the commuter who now takes the strain.

I am sure that BR would be the first to recognise that it has not been tremendously successful in its level of service in recent months. Its attention might be better directed to overcoming that before embarking upon the new railway envisaged in the Bill.

When quoting the new advertising campaign, "We're getting there" my constituents might be forgiven for asking, "Where?" Is it to Stansted, which will increase the noise and disruption in neighbouring Hertfordshire? A more acceptable answer would be, "To London and home again." If the Bill were entitled the British Railways (Welwyn Hatfield Commuters) Bill, a far more positive response might have been forthcoming from me as a local Member of Parliament.

In our discussions tonight, no mention has been made of privatisation. The need for a railway to link London and Stansted might be an opportunity for privatisation. The Government have an excellent record on privatisation, especially in transport. I hope that they will consider privatisation for the Stansted link if there must be one.

9.56 pm

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I wish to express my reservations about the Bill. I do not think that Stansted should be extended, and the fact that the proposal to do so has been passed by this House does not mean that I cannot still oppose it at every possible opportunity. British Rail is limited in its funds and so cannot construct railways here, there and everywhere. Indeed, BR often tears up tracks, with a consequent loss of service, which means fewer people using the railways.

I have been impressed with Conservative Members who have graphically described serious problems with BR operations on lines between Liverpool street and Cambridge. I always thought that the line between Euston, Crewe, Chester and the west coast main line was rather bad, but some of the stories tonight beat anything that I have ever heard or experienced.

The crucial problem is that unlimited money is not available. The Government control the amount of money that BR can spend. The question is whether BR should be allowed to spend its money on the line to Stansted—which I oppose—or whether it should be spent on some other project. The Minister asked my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and myself whether we had any ideas for other projects that would mean a 7 per cent. return on capital invested, and said that we should write to British Rail with our suggestions. I do not look at economics in that way. I have a different view of how we should run the economy of this country, and it is not the compartmentalised view taken by the Minister.

If I had to guess about a line with a potential 7 per cent. return, I would suggest a connection to Heathrow. A fast train between Heathrow and the centre of London would mint money for BR day in and day out, and would provide a return of well over 7 per cent. Yet BR has not put forward any proposal for such a link. Indeed, it has not put forward a proposal to construct a link to Manchester.

We have been told that on a previous occasion the House has considered a Bill to allow BR to put forward proposals for a link to Manchester and to give it the power to construct that link. Nevertheless, nothing has happened. I fear that if the Bill is passed, and with money being so limited, it is likely that BR will favour the link to Stansted rather than the link to Manchester.

Of course, Manchester has always been done down as an airport. Yet people in the midlands, especially the west midlands, would find it as easy to go to Manchester airport as to go to London——

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson *rose in his place and claimed to move*, That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House divided: Ayes 66, Noes 37.

Division No. 84] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Baldry, Tony
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bottomley, Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Colvin, Michael
Cope, John
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Holt, Richard
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Proctor, K. Harvey
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roe, Mrs Marion
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Wainwright, R.
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson and
Mr. Vivian Bendall.

NOES

Boyes, Roland
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Clay, Robert
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dover, Den
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hayes, J.
Haynes, Frank
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Murphy, Christopher
Pike, Peter
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silvester, Fred
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Robert Litherland.

Whereupon MR. SPEAKER *declared that the Question was not decided in the affirmative because it was not supported by the majority prescribed by Standing Order No. 32 (Majority for closure).*

It being after Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed on Wednesday.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Agricultural Holdings Bill *[Lords]* may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. *—[Mr. Neubert.]*

Bishops (Retirement) Measure

Question again proposed.

That the Bishops (Retirement) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

10.12 pm

Mr. Greenway: As I was saying before the interruption, the second central question that I want to put to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) relates to the possible age at which the Measure might be put with particular force in the direction of any bishop or archibishop. I had asked that the Measure be applied on the lenient side rather than with any severity and I had given my reason for that, pointing out that bishops can become ill physically and mentally, like anybody else, but they can also recover. I hope that when he replies my hon. Friend will be able to assure me that some allowance for that possible contingency will be made.

Will my hon. Friend say what will happen to the widows and young families of any bishop retired under the Measure? If one looks at what happens to the wife or widow of a clergyman, there is plenty of room for worry and dissatisfaction. Could a bishop be retired with his family into penury and without a home, as happens all too often with the widows of clergymen or clergy who fall by the wayside? I should be grateful for a response to that most important question.

10.14 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): It is unfortunate that we have to resume the debate in the absence of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who made such a characteristic contribution at an earlier stage. However, we must do the best that we can without the assistance of his lights. The right hon. Gentleman regarded the established status of the Church of England as a self-evident absurdity, but he was characteristically kind enough to show that he arrived at that conclusion not by any process of reasoning, but as a matter of prejudice. He repeated several times that that was a consequence of the liberal, radical and free-thinking background from which he sprang.

It is no bad thing to recognise that there are institutions which are valuable and durable but which express massive and widespread prejudice and may not necessarily be accessible to demonstration, either from history or contemporary logic, of their necessity or value. Such I believe to be the establishment of the Church of England.

Apart from that larger matter raised by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield, a misunderstanding was implicit in his remarks, which perhaps the Second Commissioner may be able to clarify before the end of the debate. The right hon. Gentleman seemed to believe that when the retirement Measure was put into effect a Member of the House of Lords was removed by the process, whether by the decision of an archbishop or the decision of the Crown. I believe that to have been mistaken. I understand that a bishop who is retired under the Measure remains a bishop. The see that he occupied is vacated and it is the see which is represented by an automatic permanent or rotating seat in the House of Lords.

Historically, the Lords spiritual are present in the upper House not by virtue of their spiritual character or the spiritualities with which they are endowed, but because they hold by barony the temporalities of their see of which they are seized as long as they remain a bishop. Consequently, the apprehension of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield that we are providing ourselves with the means of removing individuals from the service in another place is unfounded. The see will continue to be represented in the House of Lords either invariably or under law in rotation. I believe that it would be worthwhile for the Second Commissioner to clear up that matter if he comes to intervene.

Mr. Frank Field: The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has said that we must continue our debate without the considerable skills of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). However, he is not making too bad a job of it. Before the right hon. Gentleman completes his contribution, will he comment on another aspect of my right hon. Friend's contribution? He mentioned that we were presented with the Church of England as being the first nationalised body in Britain. My right hon. Friend also called for disestablishment. Is that not calling for its privatisation by turning over the national church to the sect?

Mr. Powell: The hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) has certainly illustrated some of the quandaries into which those who argue from prejudice but purport to be guided by principle may from time to time fall. I hope that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield may have the leisure at some future date to take note of the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

10.19 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am pleased that we have an established Church, and the unique relationship between the Church and state is to be commended. Obviously, it is sometimes tempestuous, but at the best of times it is an excellent working relationship. That is why the Measure is to be welcomed.

I declare an interest as a member of the General Synod. I could not vote on the Measure when it came before the previous Synod in November 1983 and when it received final approval in July 1984, but if I had been a member then I would have supported it with the utmost vigour because it will enable diocesan and suffragan bishops to retire or resign with the minimum of fuss. We are asking for minimal requirements. It is correct that such a bishop can consult the archbishop of the same province and tender his resignaation to him in a written instrument.

I am worried about the age limit. It is strange that anyone can become a bishop at the age of 30 and can continue until he is 70, according to the Ecclesiastical Offices (Age Limit) Measure 1975. Why should all bishops remain in post until a certain age? Why cannot they retire earlier if they wish? Why should some elderly diocesan and suffragan bishops who are extremely good not be allowed to stay on for longer? Why must they retire at a set age?

I do not think that some of our young bishops are the very best. Why cannot they retire earlier? Indeed, they can. It is regrettable that we lose some of our best bishops in the prime of their life when their theological views are welcome to the state and encourage us. I hope that a special provision can be found so that they can continue to represent their see for a further period. Those with the

Christian faith and values are essential ingredients in the House of Lords, where there are 24 bishops and two archbishops. It is a loss to Parliament when they retire at retirement age.

I am worried about the six-month notice period. While I accept that some people may say that that is plenty of time to prepare the vacancy-in-see committee to advertise the bishopric, it takes a special person to become a bishop, and sometimes takes longer than six months to prepare for that appointment.

Similarly, while the vacancy-in-see committee looks after the affairs of a diocese, it is a serious matter when a suffragan bishop is not in situ. Obviously, when a bishop decides to retire, one hopes that there will be proper liaison with the archbishop and suffragan bishop to ensure that they can handle the trying business, and the additional responsibilities, including the spiritual help necessary.

Clause 1(1) enables a bishop to retire early. It may take a long time to find a suitable candidate. I wish that we were not discussing Crown appointments, and that a suitable list were hanging around from which to choose the right people——

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): Christian people.

Mr. Bruinvels: Indeed—a list from which to choose Christian people.

Clause 3(1)(2) deals with illness and incapacity, which I hope is an isolated problem. I hope that few bishops appear either incapable or ill. However, I must deal with the judgment of the two senior diocesan bishops who are required to give advice, and to assist the archbishop in deeming whether a bishop is incapacitated by physical or mental disability, and unable to perform his episcopal duties. I am worried that the senior bishops coming from the same province as the bishop who is rumoured to be unwell will know that bishop extremely well. They might be overforgiving and say that he is all right when he is not, or the situation may be reversed. Perhaps consideration can be given to bringing senior diocesan bishops from the other province to make that judgment, together with the archbishop.

I notice that my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) will have additional responsibilities, as the cost of the medical examination is to be paid by the Church Commissioners' funds and naturally we shall be looking to that with interest.

It is sad when any bishop finds it necessary to retire. The responsibilities of a senior bishop are onerous. I look forward to seeing some bishops retire earlier than we would have expected and others—the excellent bishops who have given the best guidance to the Anglican community — being allowed to stay on past the maximum age of 70.

10.25 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) suggested that bishops reach the prime of their life at the age of 70, but if I remember my Bible correctly, it is normally at 70, or three score years and 10, that one is meant to pass on rather than be at one's best performing age.

This Measure was passed by the Synod with no opposition in any of the three houses, and I hope that this House, although it has the constitutional duty of overseeing such Measures, will, as always, be mindful of the view taken by the Synod. I hope that we shall not interfere, other than in matters of substantial controversy, with what the Synod has done when it has considered the matter in detail. Although we are a long-stop under the constitution for what the Synod does, increasingly the Synod is responsible for, and able to make, its own decision. I hope that we shall allow that ever more impressive body to do just that.

My second point may have been touched on in the opening speech of the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee), who spoke on behalf of the Church Commissioners. If so, I apologise for not having heard what he said, but the debate came on slightly earlier than we thought it would. I am concerned that this matter has taken from July 1984 to February 1986 to come from the Synod to the House. It is not excusable that it takes nearly two years for legislation approved by the Synod to come here for its final debate and approval.

I should be grateful if the hon. Member for Wokingham would explain why that has happened, and for some assurances that methods will be found, through the members of the Ecclesiastical Committee and those who are working to expedite business on behalf of the Synod, to ensure that we do not have such a delay again. It is in nobody's interest that the House gives a final assent to a Measure two years after it has been debated in the General Synod. On occasion such matters may have substantially changed in such a long period, and it serves neither of us well if there are such substantial delays. I hope that they will not be repeated.

10.27 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I apologise to those who proceeded me for the fact that I was not here to hear their speeches. I had another engagement which kept me out of the Chamber.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was wrong to say that requests to the House to consider Measures coming from the General Synod go through on the nod. That was pointed out to him by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), and it must be emphasised. These Measures should not go through on the nod. They should be considered seriously by the House, and I am glad that they are not being considered at as late an hour of night, or as early in the morning, as they sometimes are. This is a reasonable hour for us to consider a Measure.

I am not altogether out of touch with the Church in my Canterbury constituency, and this Measure disturbs me a little. I do not intend to oppose it, but it was decided some years ago—I think in 1975—that bishops should retire at the age of 65. That seems to be a little early, although not quite so early as the retirement age of civil servants. They retire at 60. However, their contribution to public life does not end at 60. Permanent secretaries continue to make a great contribution to public life, based upon their long experience in the Civil Service.

The suggestion that bishops should have to retire at 65 worries me, but that is not the subject of this debate. We are debating whether they should be allowed to retire before the age of 65. This Measure makes provision for retirement on that basis. If, however, a bishop is thought to be unfit either in body or in mind before he reaches the age of 65, the Measure provides for his removal from his post. I do not dispute that this power should be provided,

[Mr. David Crouch]

but it is a formidable power to place in the hands of the Church. We ought to consider what would happen if hon. Members were subject to such a formidable power that they could be removed.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: We are.

Mr. Crouch: Some are, but not my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels). He maintains a position that allows nobody to get at him, I am sure. He is not quite all things to all men, but he is all things to the right men. I notice that the hon. Member for Birkenhead is nodding in agreement. We know that this is a political fact of life. We can be deposed if we are thought to be not fit politically for our appointment, but we cannot be deposed if we are thought to be unwell. We might be unwell for two or three months, or for six months or a year. Should we then be deposed? Certainly not. A Member of Parliament is not thrown out because people say, "He is not doing his job because physically he is a sick man." A Member of Parliament is not thrown out because somebody says, "He seems, because of his views, to be a sick man." How terrifying a prospect that would be.

If it is Parliament's responsibility to consider what is done in that other realm of the state, the Church, it is important for Parliament to pause and consider this formidable power of archbishops and bishops to remove somebody who they think might be unfit for the job.

I have perhaps over-exaggerated the implications of this small Measure, but it is the duty of the House of Commons sometimes to look behind the written word and ensure that it is not passing something that is wrong or over-emphasised and which we might later regret.

I rest my case in the hands of the Church. I am sure that it will take guidance about its decisions, not by coming to us, but by going to another place. I hope that it will do that. On this occasion, and at this hour, I am a little disturbed at the formidable power that it has given itself.

10.35 pm

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): I warmly welcome the Measure and I shall support it. When my late father was consecrated Bishop of Sherborne in 1946 he was the youngest bishop in the Church of England. He spent a long time as bishop, and within a year of his consecration the diocesan bishop died and my father therefore had to assume his responsibilities for a year. If I have one regret about today's synodical government, it is in the time that it takes to put measures through the Synod.

In those days there was one suffragan bishop in the diocese whereas today there are two—who do less work because of the bureaucracy which has taken over. I am interested in this because, being a member of the Standing Committee on the Gas Bill, I am interested to note that the Church Commissioners have bought the freeholds of local gas and electricity showrooms. Perhaps that means that they know more about Sunday trading than we do.

This measure shows how interested the Synod and the Church Commissioners are in the well-being of the bishops who are often given responsibility and social positions which are impossible to maintain without the full support of the Church.

I regret the attacks sometimes made on diocesan bishops because they happen to live in houses which have been in the Church's ownership for many generations. Such attacks are unwarranted and unjustifiable.

Over the years I have watched with admiration the care in which the Church has for its bishops and for their widows. I am delighted that this is a further step forward.

When my father was diocesan bishop of Truro he fought long and hard to reduce the retirement age for bishops to 68. This measure will give a little more freedom and a little more reality. It will help to avoid some of the appalling conditions which our bishops have suffered over many years. In the days when my father first became a bishop his salary was paid out of diocesan fees. This led to many extraordinary ambiguities, not least of which was that we lived in six different houses in Salisbury close, always taking on the tail end leases of others when they were about to fall. Indeed, one of the houses designated to become the house of the Bishop of Sherborne is now occupied by my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). However, I warmly welcome the measure and I commend it to the House.

10.39 pm

Sir William van Straubenzee: By leave of the House, I shall reply briefly. I am obliged to the House for the care which properly is being taken about the Measure. It is a care which I am certain that the General Synod and the Church of England not only do not resent but of which they are appreciative.

I do not want to go into the wide matters raised by the right hon. Members for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and for South Down (Mr. Powell) about the establishment of the Church. They are both far more learned than I. I was at school with the right hon. Member for Chesterfield who converted me at about 14½ years to being a member of the Labour party. I matured earlier than he. On these matters, I accept what the right hon. Member for South Down said and believed to be the correct statement. This Measure does not create any history. There was a retirement Measure in 1951. In so far as Members of another place are "retired", it started in 1951. This Measure consolidates and perhaps gives greater rights to the person concerned. Enforced retirement has been mentioned in several speeches, but it is not mentioned in the Measure, and it is of much older provenance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) spoke with his usual care and was anxious—I quite see why—about the steps that have to be taken. I hope that he will study clause 3 closely. The archbishop of the province has to be concerned, two senior diocesans have to be brought in, their concurrence has to be obtained and there is a medical inspection, the cost of which is properly not met by the diocesan concerned. The medical inspection might reveal possibilities of recovery. That is the point of such a careful inspection. My hon. Friend questioned the age of retirement.

Mr. Greenway: My point was that the process should not be started if there is any possibility of recovery, although I accept the value of the inspection as a fall back.

Sir William van Straubenzee: With any Measure or Bill, we have to consider the cold print. I hope and believe that, in application, if there is any hope whatever of recovery, the process will not be started. The House is

used to looking at the cold print of legislation. Neither Ministers nor anyone else can rely on good faith. We have to safeguard people's rights by cold print. Written into the Measure are rights which will be of enormous benefit, especially in the type of case that my hon. Friend has in mind, assuming that it ever arises. I believe that the safeguards will ensure that the matter is handled with the greatest sympathy and care.

The Measure does not deal with the age of retirement. My hon. Friend's study of these matters is far more erudite than mine, but when he gave the example of the great Archbishop Barbage, I thought that he gave one of the best examples of the need for a compulsory retirement age. As a boy, I sat enraptured by some of the magnificent sermons that he gave as Bishop of Winchester. Like many others, I hold in immense esteem his work for Church and state. The saddest section of the beautiful biography of Archbishop Barbage was the account of his chaplains having to go to him as an old man and tell him that he was past his work. He asked to be left alone so that he might ponder their advice. He then asked them back and, great and marvellous man that he was, thanked them for their courage in telling him. I want to tell my hon. Friend that he is a long way from retirement, but I am much closer to it. Sadly, one of my reasons for leaving the House—not sadly for everyone else but sadly for me—at the end of this Parliament, is that I have seen too many hon. Members of this honourable House stay on just a little too long. It is far better to go while people are still able, as in my case, to grate out the words "What a pity" about one, than "When is the old goat going to realise that he is past it?"

Mr. Greenway: I would point out to my hon. Friend that there was another biography of Dr. Cyril Barbage which did not take the kind of line that my hon. Friend has described. Indeed, it took the opposite line. Does my hon. Friend know about Bishop Winnington-Ingram who is still playing first-class hockey at the age of 72?

Sir William van Straubenzee: I have listened to Bishop Winnington-Ingram literally preaching with his hands. I doubt whether my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North will remember, but he preached with his hands and was the most expressive of preachers.

Obviously, there are exceptions to the general rule, but the general rule is important. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) raised this point and I must emphasise that the general rule is not retirement at 65; that is when the pension is payable. The age is 70. I hope that that will assist my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury. In so far as one can measure these matters in human terms on the number of years a man, and perhaps in future a woman, spends on the earth, 70 is about right. I know, as all hon. Members will know, that there are some hon. Members who have been dead since they took their seats. On the whole, these things must be measured carefully.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked a reasonable question about the delay. If the hon. Gentleman notices the rather special date of the re-examination of this matter, he will see that it was at the time when the previous bishop's appointment Measure was turned down by the House. That was a traumatic moment for the Church of England and the hon. Gentleman will know that, as he follows these matters very closely.

It was not unreasonable to look at the matter closely and to consider how it ought to be handled in relation to the next Measure which I hope to speak on shortly. That may not be a good answer to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, but we are both politicians and we therefore understand the realities of these matters.

I was grateful for the quick and personal comments from my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) as he speaks from experience of the care of bishop's widows. I trust and believe that such care is extended to other clergy. Only today I signed a letter to an Opposition Member in relation to the death of a young clergyman in the hon. Gentleman's diocese. I know that money and housing cannot bring back a young husband who was killed in an accident. However, in so far as those caring things can help, they have been provided in that case.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) made the interesting suggestion that the panel of bishops should come from another province. Is this not a case where men who have worked with somebody ought to play a role? Apart from anything else, it might be a safeguard against — though heaven forbid that this should happen—some kind of witch hunt. These men would know each other, would have worked together and would know each other's eccentricities. That is the reason for drawing the senior diocesans from the same province.

I trust that I have, in accordance with the traditions of the House, dealt with each speech, however inadequately and briefly. I sense that the mood of the House is, I hope, to give assent to the Measure and certainly that would be appreciated. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Bishops (Retirement) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

Ecclesiastical Fees Measure

10.50 pm

Sir William van Straubenzee (The Second Church Estates Commissioner, Representing Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

This is a Measure that is designed to change the method by which draft orders that are connected with ecclesiastical fees are brought, first, before the General Synod and secondly, if necessary, before the House. They deal with peripheral fees with which we are all concerned in various ways. These are fees that may be charged in the parishes for weddings and burials, for example. Secondly, the orders relate to ecclesiastical judges and legal officers' fees and the fees charged by ecclesiastical courts. Thirdly, there are the legal officers' annual fees relating to the annual retainers that are paid to provincial and diocesan registrars.

During the latter half of the century we have, unfortunately, had to deal with inflation and it has been necessary from time to time to increase the fees by way of adjustment to take account of inflation. The General Synod has come to the conclusion that to do this by way of an affirmative order every time, when it is often not a matter of controversy, is not a very proper use of the House's time.

The Measure that is before the House proposes that the Standing Committee of the General Synod can determine that an affirmative resolution is not necessary. However, I want to make it abundantly clear that any one member of the General Synod can have that decision overturned if he or she wishes a debate to take place. If any one member wants that to happen, there has to be an affirmative resolution from the General Synod. Members of the General Synod will be given the right, in accordance with the standing orders of the Synod, which require 25 members to be in support, to propose amendments, a right which they do not have currently.

There was a change made as a result of discussion of the Ecclesiastical Committee, to which I express my appreciation and gratitude. As first presented, the Measure did not provide that there must be a negative procedure, as we know it in this place, and annulment by the House and by another place. The Ecclesiastical Committee doubted that that was proper. It was rightly careful, quite correctly in my respectful view, of the rights of Her Majesty's subjects. That is exactly what it is there for. After careful reconsideration, the negative procedure has been inserted. Hon. Members will find that in each of the appropriate clauses it is provided that the House has the right, if it so wishes, at any time to raise a matter by the negative procedure. There were two votes against in the House of Clergy, eight votes against in the House of Laity and no votes against in the Houses of Bishops, and the Ecclesiastical Committee of Parliament has found this procedure to be expedient.

10.54 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): The Ecclesiastical Committee has served the House well in securing that both classes of order which can be made under this Measure will be subject to parliamentary negative procedure. It is right and proper that we should not entirely relinquish parliamentary control over the content of these Measures. I think that it was in the original Measure that only one type of order was subject to negative procedure. It was right that the provision was extended to both, and that has resulted from the work of the Ecclesiastical Committee and the reconsideration that was given by the General Synod.

I hope that I am not straying too far when I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the General Synod may have come up with the solution to a problem which has vexed Procedure Committees and other Committees dealing with the procedures of the House. One of our difficulties in this place is our inability, when an order comes before us, to do other than approve or reject it. Even this House has found no means so far of being able, however desperately it might desire it, to discuss an amendment to an order. Perhaps a trail has been blazed for us by the General Synod by making it possible for an individual member to secure a debate—for an individual member of the Synod if supported by 25 others to secure that an amendment to an order can be debated. It is not often that, in our superior pride, we find ourselves looking to the Synod for guidance or enlightment in matters of our own procedure, but here the Synod may have hit upon something which is worthy of the attention of a procedural Committee of this House.

10.56 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): One of the three short points I wanted to make has been made by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell). I hope that it will fall upon willing and listening ears because the procedural device that this Measure will bring to the Synod could with advantage be adopted here. The reason given for it by the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) was that in some measure it had to do with the work load of the Synod. During the short time I spent in the last Synod after I was co-opted to it, as was the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), one of the things that became apparent to me was that the time of the Synod was severely pressed.

It is important, while retaining safeguards, as this does, to make sure that routine matters, though important, can be disposed of in the most effective and efficient way. Quite properly, the Synod has an enormous amount of work to do and if Parliament or the Church or the country expects it to do its job properly, we should allow it to have procedures that permit that to happen.

My last point is perhaps slightly more topical. I hope that the fees set out for the different types of activity, parochial and ecclesiastical, and legal officers' fees, will be examined. Sometimes different rates may be more appropriate in inner city areas, for example than elsewhere. We politicians sometimes come up against the problem of recruiting members at a standard rate in the more affluent shires and in the less affluent inner cities. I hope that in the debate on the commission's report, bearing in mind the welcome that it was given by the Synod when it met some weeks ago and remembering especially the task that is ahead of the Church Commissioners over funding for the projects and priorities set out in that report—especially the urban priority areas—some thought will be given to the way in which the fee is charged.

I hope that the fee charged and therefore the income received may be adjusted so that standard rates do not necessarily apply. Once a system and a structure have been organised and have gained assent, it may be possible to do things that, even in a small way, could bring about what the Archbishop's commission has proposed. I hope that the Measure will provide safeguards for steps of that sort as it will for the standard rate fees for the normal activities of the Church.

10.59 pm

Sir William van Straubenzee: I should like to thank the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I am delighted to think that we at Church house may have found an answer to one of Parliament's problems. However, that is not a matter for me tonight. I shall draw to the attention of the appropriate authorities the interesting suggestion made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. My immediate reaction, not rejecting his suggestion but thinking of it while I speak, is that I doubt whether we have the legal right and ability to make a difference in the fees as between one part of the country and another. As I say, that is my immediate reaction and the matter must be looked at. We are talking about the fees that may be charged in the parishes. I know, having chaired one of the commissions, that the clergy strongly wish that variable fees should, as far as possible, reflect the enormous pastoral opportunities of the clergy and the heavy expenses which fall upon families at a time of bereavement. Therefore, the fees are not uniform, imposed on a mathematical basis, but are geared to meet the pastoral duties of the Church. I hope that the House will accept the Measure.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Ecclesiastical Fees Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for Her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

Agricultural Holdings Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

11.1 pm

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This is a consolidation measure, which incorporates Law Commission recommendations. The law which it consolidates is that contained in the Agricultural Holdings Act 1948 and various other enactments passed since then. The Bill has been referred to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills which has reported upon it in terms with which the House is, no doubt, well familiar. I hope that, in the light of that report, the House will be able to proceed to approve the Bill without delay. The fact that we are able to do so is the result of the expertise and diligence of the members of the Joint Committee. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in once again expressing our thanks for their efforts.

11.2 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne): I thank the Solicitor-General for those remarks. Our approval of the Bill is not a formality — it is right that not just Government but Parliament should satisfy itself that what is intended is pure consolidation. I am so satisfied. I should like to endorse the Solicitor-General's remarks about the excellent job that the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills has done.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Bill immediately considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, and Question, That the Bill be now read the Third time, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 58 (Third Reading), and agreed to.*

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendment.

Mr. Dennis Foskett

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

11.3 pm

Mr. Vivian Bendall (Ilford, North): This matter is worrying and causing considerable problems for some of my constituents. It concerns Dennis Foskett, who last November was committed for trial at the Old Bailey, having committed a double murder in May 1985.

In many respects this is a tragic case, as the two people killed were the man's doctor and the man's wife, who tried to intervene. The real and urgent problem that is causing my constituents and myself concern is that the court recommended that Mr. Foskett be put in an open hospital — Goodmayes hospital — which is an open mental hospital in my constituency. Obviously my constituents are concerned that this person, having committed a double murder, should be in a hospital which is generally open. It means that he has fairly easy access to the grounds of the hospital and to areas outside the grounds.

I accept that much of the problem relates to the Mental Health Act 1983, but I feel, as do many of my constituents, that a period of six months between May 1985 and November 1985, when he came to trial, is rather a short time in which to assess an individual who has committed two horrific crimes, one against his doctor and the other against his wife. Therefore, I understand the concern of my constituents. I have many letters written by my constituents concerning this matter.

One of the other concerns is that the grounds of the hospital and the gates to the grounds are open, as are the buildings of the hospital. Therefore, anybody can walk freely from the hospital building or the grounds in virtually any part of the day or night. It means that there is an element of risk to children at an adjacent primary school. Can anyone with any certainty and with any guarantee say sincerely, even with the best professional experience and advice available, that an individual who has committed such crimes may not on another occasion take it upon himself to find a way out of the mental institution, which is completely open, and commit a further crime? That is the essence of the problem which faces my constituents. I have some sympathy with them.

Others have also expressed concern about the placing of Mr. Foskett in this mental hospital. The Confederation of Health Service employees has lodged complaints with the local hospital management committee. I have also received verbal complaints from members of staff at the hospital.

I have been in correspondence with the Department of Health and Social Security and the Home Office. I am a little perturbed at the time that it has taken to receive certain answers. I originally wrote to the DHSS on 30 December and received an acknowledgement on 9 January. I then heard nothing from the DHSS or the Home Office, the DHSS having informed me that the matter was the responsibility of the Home Office. I wrote to the Home Office again on 20 January, and did not receive a reply until 5 February. This matter has caused a great deal of local concern. It has been well reported in local newspapers and on Essex Radio. There has been much local concern.

I shall give an example to the House of how easy it is to gain access to Goodmayes hospital. A reporter of a national Sunday newspaper was able to go to Goodmayes hospital quite openly. He went to the reception desk and asked which ward Dennis Foskett was in. He was directed to the ward concerned, and when he arrived at the ward he asked a doctor or nurse where Mr. Foskett was. He was pointed out to him at the end of the ward. The reporter then took a photograph and left the building. I do not condone such an attitude or such irresponsibility by a national newspaper, but it emphasises how easy it is to enter some of these mental hospitals and, therefore, how easy it would be for a patient to get out of such a hospital.

I understand the problems of my hon. Friend the Minister with regard to the 1983 Act, but I challenge that Act. I do not doubt that sooner or later someone will walk out of a free hospital and commit another such offence. Society generally wants to avoid that, and it is right that society is concerned about this issue.

I firmly believe that a period of six months is not long enough to assess someone who has committed such a crime. That person should be kept in an establishment for rather longer, so that a fuller assessment can be made. Perhaps, after a period of time, if the person is seen to be of stable nature, it might be appropriate to consider moving him to a place with more freedom.

I understand the concern felt by my constituents. I thank the House for the opportunity to bring the matter before it tonight. I hope that my hon. Friend will give some assurance that such cases in open hospitals will be closely monitored, and also that he receives regular reports from the local hospital management committee or other responsible bodies about the progress of individuals put into those institutions for the sort of offence committed by Mr. Foskett.

11.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. David Mellor): My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, North (Mr. Bendall) has spoken eloquently of his constituents' anxieties in this matter. Let me say at once that I think it perfectly understandable that this matter should have given rise to genuine concern. I want to set out the facts of the case as I understand them, and hope that there will be some reassurance for my hon. Friend.

Prior to the tragic events of 17 May 1985, Dennis Foskett had lived peacefully with his wife for more than 20 years. Statements before the court describe him and his wife as a devoted couple. He had no convictions but did have a history of depression which started after a bout of influenza in 1970. The depression recurred periodically over the intervening years, and his most recent illness began in April 1985, following another attack of influenza. It was so severe that he was forced to give up work because he suffered from anxiety to such an extent that he spontaneously broke down in tears.

A few days before the tragedy he consulted his family doctor, Dr. Glickman. She prescribed some drugs, which he thought made him worse, and on Friday 17 May Mrs. Foskett asked Dr. Glickman to visit her husband at home because his condition had deteriorated. Dr. Glickman agreed to visit him on her way home after she finished surgery.

At 7.12 pm the same evening neighbours saw Mr. Foskett run out of his front door shouting for help. He had

a hammer in his hand which he put on a dustbin lid and he kept repeating that he had killed his wife. The police and an ambulance were called and several passers by went to his assistance. He returned to the house to fetch a glass of water and some tablets which he immediately took. Mrs. Foskett was found to be already dead and Dr. Glickman died shortly afterwards in hospital, the cause of death in both cases being a fractured skull. Mr. Foskett was also taken to hospital for a stomach washout. He made a second suicide attempt three days later, which was also unsuccessful.

When Mr. Foskett appeared at the Central Criminal Court on 22 November 1985—six months later—he was convicted of two offences of manslaughter, both by reason of diminished responsibility. The court had before it three medical reports — one from Dr. Paul Bowden in his capacity as consultant forensic psychiatrist to Her Majesty's prison, Brixton, where Mr. Foskett had been held on remand, one from Dr. Patrick Galloway, consultant forensic psychiatrist at St. George's hospital and one from Dr. Hirst, consultant psychiatrist at Goodmayes hospital. All three doctors agreed that Mr. Foskett was suffering from a severe depressive illness at the time of the offence and that he continued to need treatment for his depression. However, they also agreed that in the six months since his offence, during which time he had received appropriate treatment for his condition, there had been a marked improvement in his mental state. In their view, so long as Mr. Foskett continued to receive the appropriate treatment for his illness, he was unlikely to pose a significant danger to other people and did not require conditions of security. It was their unanimous recommendation that treatment could safety be administered at Goodmayes hospital.

The court accepted the psychiatrists' recommendations, making a hospital order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act 1983 placing Mr. Foskett in Goodmayes hospital, together with a restriction order under section 41 of the Act. The latter order ensures that Mr. Foskett cannot be set at liberty without the consent of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary or a decision by a mental health review tribunal.

Mr. Bendall: Will my hon. Friend say where Mr. Foskett received his treatment while he was in custody before trial?

Mr. Mellor: He was treated in Brixton prison while on remand. All that followed flowed from the judge's order, which directed that Mr. Foskett be placed at a specific hospital. It was not a special hospital order that provided for any form of security. The evidence before the judge was that Mr. Foskett did not require any security. I stress that, because many of the powers that might have flowed from a special hospital order do not arise in this case.

As my hon. Friend realises, I cannot comment on the court's decision. it is fundamental that the Government do not seek to interfere in the decisions of the judiciary or to question the exercise of its discretion. Parliament provides the courts with powers to deal appropriately with all types of offender, but it is for the court to decide in an individual case what the appropriate sentence should be. I can say, however, that judges at the Central Criminal Court are very experienced in dealing with cases like this one.

It is, of course, essential that courts should have full information on which to base their decisions, and that was so in this case. The court had the three reports from psychiatrists, which I have mentioned, which were able to take account of the period Mr. Foskett had spent on remand, not just the few horrifying moments in which the dreadful killings took place. It also had a full description of the facilities and accommodation available at Goodmayes hospital, so that it knew precisely in what circumstances Mr. Foskett would be held and how he would be treated. If the court had been dissatisfied or worried, it could have called for further reports or made a different disposal, but it did not do so. I am sure the court thought very carefully about these matters and took the decision which seemed proper on the evidence before it.

It is normal practice for my Department, when receiving a court order, to call for copies of any medical reports which may have been made and to confirm that the placement is an appropriate one. If there seems to be any reason to think that the placement is inappropriate—for example, if we are not sure that it is sufficiently secure — we consult the responsible medical officer, but —I stress this point, as it is relevant to my hon. Friend's anxiety — the Home Secretary has no power in such circumstances to direct that a particular patient should be transferred. Accordingly, if the patient's responsible medical officer And the hospital managers are satisfied that the placement is appropriate, there is no action which the Home Secretary — or the Secretary of State for Social Services — can take to effect that patient's transfer to a different hospital. That is the rub of my hon. Friend's anxiety.

My hon. Friend has been punctilious in carrying out his obligations on behalf of his constituents, and he wrote a letter expressing his worry. That letter reached the Home Office before Goodmayes had sent details of Mr. Foskett's reception. I immediately arranged for Dr. Knapman, Mr. Foskett's responsible medical officer, to be consulted urgently on the suitability of Mr. Foskett's placement at Goodmayes hospital. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security similarly arranged for my hon. Friend's concern to be drawn to the attention of the health authority.

I am sorry that as a result of those steps being taken there was a longer delay in replying to my hon. Friend's letter than I should have wished. I hope he understands that inquiries needed to be made. I regret that that time elapsed. I sought to explain the position in my letter of 5 February, and further on 17 February, when I was able to tell my hon. Friend that Dr. Knapman has confirmed that in his opinion Mr. Foskett remains free of any symptoms of mental disorder and poses no risk of any sort to anyone at present and that there is no case for transferring him from Goodmayes hospital. That being the responsible medical officer's view, there is nothing that I can do about the matter. It is for the responsible medical officer to make his decision.

That is the case at the moment, but I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance which he seeks, which is that I shall ensure that Mr. Foskett's case is kept under close scrutiny, and if there is any evidence of any deterioration in his mental state or general behaviour I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall not hesitate to take up with the responsible medical officer once again the question of Mr. Foskett's placement at Goodmayes hospital.

Although, as I have explained, the Home Secretary has no power to order the transfer of a restricted patient from one hospital to another against the advice of the

[Mr. Mellor]

responsible medical officer, such a patient cannot be given permission to leave the hospital, even for a short period, without my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary's consent. I can assure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend's consent would not be given unless he was satisfied that the patient could re-enter the community without danger to the public. I very much hope that my hon. Friend and his constituents will have been reassured by what I have been able to tell him this evening.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 25 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

1. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the domestic ratepayers in *(a)* Liverpool, *(b)* Manchester, *(c)* Stockport and *(d)* England and Wales as a whole receive housing benefit.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): We estimate that in 1984-85 the proportion of ratepayers receiving a rate rebate in the four areas was approximately 50 per cent., 57 per cent., 31 per cent. and 35 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures demonstrate the desirability of a reform of the rating system on the lines outlined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment?

Mr. Major: I concur with that point as housing benefit now goes a long way up the income scale and many of us feel that it goes an undesirably long way up that scale.

Mr. Eastham: Do those figures project an idea to the Minister of the sheer poverty that is being experienced in some major cities? Is it not about time that there was a complete review of the benefits and subsidies that are a burden on the ratepayer? Ought they not to be a burden on the Government?

Mr. Major: The figures show that housing benefit now goes to one household in three, and that is a remarkable statistic. The benefit has doubled in real terms over the past five years and is still a substantial amount of money.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister said that 57 per cent. of ratepayers in Manchester receive housing benefit. Is that not, even for this Government, a shocking indictment showing the poverty level of wages in Manchester and the number of people who are dependent on state benefits and who have to claim housing benefit? Should not the Government be doing something about poverty in the urban areas?

Mr. Major: I am not sure to what extent the hon. Gentleman's point arises directly from the main question. However, what clearly arises from the hon. Gentleman's question and the answer is the extent to which housing benefit exists to help those people.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Minister's answer not show, first, how rents and poverty have increased under this Government; secondly, that the only way for someone to get housing benefit reasonably high up the income scale is if their rent is well above average; and, thirdly, how much damage will be caused by the proposal to make all such people pay 20 per cent. of their rates?

Mr. Major: I do not believe that any of those propositions is correct. Even after the changes in housing benefit, expenditure is still above the 1979 levels. Future proposals for local government finance are still under consultation and we must wait to see what emerges from them.

Nurses and Midwives (Pay)

2. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to differentiate between the rates of pay of state registered nurses and state registered midwives; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): The pay of National Health Service nursng and midwifery staff is determined following the recommendations of an independent review body.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that state registered nurses have to undertake an 18-month course on staff nurse pay to become qualified midwives? Is he further aware that, as they get no extra pay for qualifying as midwives, fewer nurses are undertaking the course? With the birth rate rising, and expected to rise more steeply in the 1990s, where will we find the midwives to deliver those babies? Will we have to adopt natural childbirth?

Mr. Hayhoe: As I said, midwives' pay is being considered by the independent review body, and it would not be right for me to comment upon that. In connection with more general questions, I can tell my hon. Friend that a joint review between the management and staff sides of the Nursing and Midwifery Staff Negotiating Council is under way, and it is examining nursing and clinical grading structures. That will, of course, include midwives.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister give us an assurance that in future he will fully fund National Health Service pay settlements, especially those relating to care workers? Is he aware that it causes great anxiety and consternation to nurses and midwives when they are told that their pay rise will be taken out of the money available for the care of patients under their charge?

Mr. Hayhoe: No, Sir. The funding of the National Health Service is clearly understood by the House. The funds available for the next financial year are set out in the Government's White Paper.

Mr. Marlow: How does the pay of nurses and that of the professions allied to medicine compare with the pay of school teachers? Has my right hon. Friend received any indication from those professions that if the teachers should have a much enhanced salary review the nurses and professions allied to medicine would not wish the same?

Mr. Hayhoe: If my hon. Friend puts down a question, I should be glad to give him that information.

Mr. O'Brien: Is the Minister aware that people in the profession, including nurses, midwives and health visitors, are becoming disillusioned because they do not have a realistic pay structure and an adequate career

structure? Will he give some assurances that nurses, midwives and health visitors will receive proper remuneration, worthy of their value to society?

Mr. Hayhoe: If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that is the position now, what must he have thought at the end of the last Labour Government, because since then nurses' pay has been increased by over 30 per cent. in real terms?

Mr. Holt: Does my right hon. Friend consider that one of the reasons why fewer nurses are going into midwifery may be that they have to provide their own cars and are taxed on their petrol thereafter?

Mr. Hayhoe: I was unaware of that detail, but I shall study my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Donald Stewart: The Minister talked of "real" terms, but is he aware that on television when the Prime Minister wants to draw attention to high income tax rates she always picks the nurses as an example of people who are especially low paid and heavily taxed? It is plain, therefore, that she regards them as one of the underprivileged sections of the community. What will the Government do about that?

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister makes a fair point when she refers to the amount of a nurse's pay that is taken in direct taxation. The Government hope to be able to reduce the levels of direct taxation.

Civil Defence

3. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what priority he gives in civil defence planning for the National Health Service to first aid and care in the community; if he has any plans to increase this priority; and if he will make a statement.

13. **Dr. Twinn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who is responsible for the location and manning of community first aid posts.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): The draft consultation document on civil defence planning issued by the Department in 1985 proposed that emergency health care facilities be centred on single tier emergency medical centres which would be staffed wherever possible by general practitioners and retired doctors, together with qualified nurses drawn from various sources, members of the voluntary aid societies and volunteers from the public. Health authorities are responsible for the location and manning of emergency health care facilities, including first-aid posts, for isolated communities. Health emergency planning officers are responsible for co-ordinating civil defence plans in NHS regions, and they have done much work in identifying suitable premises for community care.

Mr. Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that much irresponsible nonsense is spoken about civil defence as it affects the National Health Service? We therefore welcome the comments that he has made about the way in which the matter has been co-ordinated, because all the experience of the second world war and subsequent wars has shown that it is essential to have properly planned and integrated health care facilities alongside other civil defence preparations.

Mr. Whitney: I agree with all my hon. Friend's points. Health emergency planning officers are hard at work along the lines of which he obviously approves.

Dr. Twinn: Will my hon. Friend say how many regional health authorities have completed identification of all the services?

Mr. Whitney: As I understand it, the health and emergency planning officers have identified areas in all regions. They will continue planning particular health centres to provide emergency medical help.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Minister agree that if this country is attacked by nuclear or any other kind of weapons, that nurses, doctors or girl guides running around with first-aid kits of bandages, elastoplasts, cold cream and other such things will make no contribution? It is a laughable notion. The only services that will be needed will be burial and funeral services. Will the Government stop conning people that it is possible to survive a nuclear war, and get down to the business of preventing it?

Mr. Whitney: It makes every sort of sense for this Government or any other responsible Government to take the sort of precautions that I have outlined to the House. I ask the House to recognise that peace has been preserved by following the NATO defensive strategy, which, until the present Labour party policy, Governments of both complexions have followed. The dangers of nuclear war would come about if Labour party policies were implemented.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Will my hon. Friend meet the cost of training voluntary aid personnel in civil defence duties?

Mr. Whitney: Yes, Sir.

Severe Weather Payments

4. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional resources have been provided to assist the elderly and the needy to purchase adequate heat during the recent periods of harsh weather.

7. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the exceptionally severe weather payment system during the current winter.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): There is an extensive range of heating additions for householders in greatest need, for example those over 65, the chronically sick and disabled, and families with a child under five.

The regulations also provide for single payments to claimants with extra fuel costs arising from exceptionally severe weather. Decisions whether there has been a period of exceptionally severe weather are for adjudication officers in the light of guidance from the chief adjudication officer.

I understand that in recent weeks well over 200 local offices have decided that the weather in their areas falls within the terms of the regulation.

Mr. Hardy: Is the Minister aware that that is a quite inadequate reply and does not respond to the question? It is clear that Ministers do not seem to be fully aware that this winter has been harsh and that temperatures have been

unduly severe. Are they not aware that the suffering of many elderly and needy people makes the Government's provisions appear deplorably wretched?

Mr. Newton: For six years the Government have consistently shown their awareness of the problems of elderly supplementary pensioners in the winter. That is why we have massively increased the value of the extra regular weekly payments to help with heating costs over and above what the last Labour Government ever did.

Mr. Winnick: Leaving aside the complacency that we have just heard, is the Minister aware that welfare agencies estimate that about a million pensioners are now at risk from hypothermia due to this extremely cold weather? Should not the extra payment be made automatically to all those on supplementary benefit and help given to many pensioners on small incomes but who do not qualify for supplementary benefit? When will the Government show some humanity towards those who are suffering such immense misery because they do not have enough money adequately to heat their homes?

Mr. Newton: I repeat that the best and most effective way consistently to help elderly supplementary pensioners and others is by regular and extra weekly payments for heating. These payments have been greatly extended in their scope since the present Government came into office. They are now worth £140 million a year more in real terms than when the Administration supported by the hon. Gentleman left office. That is not a record of complacency.

Mr. McCrindle: I recognise the Government's good record on heating allowances in general, but is not the problem that the severe weather payments have to be paid after the event? There is no certainty that they will be paid even then. Will my hon. Friend turn his attention to ways of encouraging elderly people to heat their homes? At the moment they simply cannot know until sometimes well after the event whether they will fall within the appropriate definition as decided by the local DHSS office.

Mr. Newton: That is precisely my point. The best way to give pensioners and others the assurance that they need in such periods is the certainty of regular weekly help with heating costs, and that is what we have consistently concentrated on for many years.

Mr. Hirst: I appreciate what the Government have done about heating allowances, but will my hon. Friend bear in mind that freezing point is as cold in the west of Scotland as it is in the south-east of England? Is he aware that many Scots find it hard to justify a system of extreme weather payments which does not appear to treat all areas equally?

Mr. Newton: As I said in answer to a private notice question on the subject last week, I am aware of the anxiety expressed in Scotland last winter under the then system, and again this winter under the present system. I must repeat my initial statement, which is the truth about the legal position, that it is a matter for local adjudication officers. I understand that the adjudication officer for Scotland as a whole is considering the issue of further advice on the matter, and I shall ensure that his attention is drawn to the renewed anxieties expressed in the House this afternoon.

Mr. Wilson: I listened with sympathy to the Minister's answer, but does he not realise that this February is the coldest on record since 1947, and that last Friday the temperature in Scotland was 1 deg. less than in Moscow? Will it take another ice age to hit Scotland before the Government give it any help?

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the tone of his first few words. I have a report which appeared in *The Scotsman* yesterday about the weather in Scotland, and I have no doubt that the adjudication officer in Scotland has also seen it.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is better to insulate the homes of the elderly than to spend money on additional heating, much of which is lost through the roof or draughty windows? Will he, therefore, discuss with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy a possible joint approach, perhaps to divert some revenue expenditure from the social security budget into capital improvements?

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I discussed that very matter with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy last Friday in connection with the 220th effective insulation scheme opened by neighbourhood energy action groups in Wandsworth. On many occasions I have made it clear that a considerable amount of supplementary benefit money is being spent on draughtproofing materials, and that before making long-term changes in the single payments arrangements we shall wish to be assured that there is an adequate alternative to ensure the future of those schemes.

Mr. Frank Field: May I give the Minister a couple of examples which illustrate the urgency of the matter? One of my constituents is so cold at night that her doctor has to give her sleeping pills to help her to sleep. Another pensioner, who is bedridden and mortally ill, can afford only to keep his single bar fire on. When will the Government's actions match the urgency of the needs of so many of our pensioners?

Mr. Newton: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the particular problems of his constituents probably require the attention of authorities other than simply the local social security office. I hope that he has discussed the cases also with the local social services department, and, if necessary, the local health authority.

Mr. Baldry: I am sure my hon. Friend recognises that there is widespread anxiety about how the severe weather payment system operates. In the light of experiences this February, will he consider establishing a review in his Department to see whether the system can be improved?

Mr. Newton: We have consistently undertaken to keep the working of this regulation under review. The immediate problem is that the method of working it was changed just before Christmas by the chief adjudication officer, following a legal judgment by the social security commissioners. Indeed, a great deal of dissatisfaction was expressed in the House last year when an attempt was made to operate the system on a more consistent basis.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister remember the reply that I received from his Department which showed that in the first six months of 1985 more old people died from hypothermia than in the whole of 1984? Is he aware that in Ayrshire during the past three weeks, every day except one has been colder than the average for February and that the temperatures last Friday night and last Sunday night

were lower than the lowest ever recorded in Ayrshire in February? What other evidence does the adjudication officer need before he gives extreme weather payments and before more people die from hypothermia in 1986?

Mr. Newton: In line with what I have already said to the hon. Gentleman's Scottish colleagues, I shall ensure that his question, which is properly directed to adjudiciation officers, is drawn to their attention.

Mr. Bill Walker: When considering temperatures in Scotland, will my hon. Friend draw the attention of adjudication officers to the substantial variations in temperatures and in moisture saturation of the air, which is an important factor in regard to deaths among the elderly? Will he bear in mind that regional variations should be taken into account, because some parts of Scotland rarely get any snow?

Mr. Newton: I shall indeed draw that matter to the attention of those concerned.

Mr. Meacher: When will the Government acknowledge that, as now operated, the exceptionally severe weather payments system is a chaotic and arbitrary farce? Is the Minister aware that in virtually every area of the country it is now 4·5 to 5 deg. lower than the average for February, and that that has not been the case for the past 40 years—since the bitter winter of 1947? Will he now, as a matter of urgency, send out a circular to all DHSS offices to ensure that all the very elderly and the severely disabled on supplementary benefit get an immediate extra cash grant of at least £5 a week for heating while the severe cold spell lasts?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman at least acknowledges that the most effective way in which to help people is by regular weekly extra payments. Every supplementary pensioner householder aged over 85 now receives £5·45 a week, on top of the amount included in the weekly scale rate. The same is true for every long-term sick and disabled person on the long-term rate of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Minister not feel pretty embarrassed that the system which he described last year as "weird and wonderful" has this year been replaced by a system that is clearly even worse? Is it not scandalous that people in the highlands and islands of Scotland receive not one penny, although they are suffering extremely bad weather conditions, as is the rest of Scotland? Can the Minister not do something more constructive than pass the matter off to the adjudication officer? Does he not recognise his responsibility?

Mr. Newton: My references to the adjudication officer are simply a state of the legal position. I shall, of course, draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of those concerned, as I have done for others of his colleagues from Scotland.

Social Security Bill

5. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to consult further with disability organisations on the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: We have not received any requests for meetings in addition to the extensive consultations that have already taken place, but we are always glad to consider the views of such organisations.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Minister aware that on Friday last the Secretary of State for Social Services received a request from several disablement groups, who were extremely angry? They believe that they have been deceived by the Minister and the Secretary of State. They believe that they have not been consulted properly about the adequacy of existing or future benefit rates, so they have completely lost confidence in the Secretary of State. If Ministers will not meet those groups, listen to what they say and substantially amend the Social Security Bill, they should give way to Ministers who will.

Mr. Newton: I suspect that the hon. Gentleman will realise from the puzzled expressions on the faces of my right hon. Friend and myself that that is the first we have heard of this. I assure him that if such a request has been or is made we shall seek to respond to it. However, I must also say that I find some of his expressions rather odd in view of the extent to which the majority of sick and disabled people will clearly have their position improved by the proposals that we have put forward for the income support system on the illustrative rates that we have given.

Mr. Galley: I hope my hon. Friend will agree that he has a record that is second to none in helping the disabled of this country. Will he accept that some people who are now in receipt of additions to benefit on the grounds of ill-health and disability may well not be eligible for the disabled premium under the income support scheme? Will he give serious considerations to a two-tier premium system, for the less severely, and the more severely, disabled?

Mr. Newton: I make two points on that. First, quite large numbers of people that my hon. Friend may have in mind are likely to qualify for a premium under another head, for example, in the category of over 80. Secondly, the most severely disabled on income support already gain considerably from the fact that attendance and mobility allowances are disregarded for supplementary benefit and would be disregarded for income support.

Mr. Wigley: Will the Minister accept that when he does eventually find the letter he will see that it is signed by a number of the leading organisers of disablement organisations, people of very high standing in the disablement world, and that they are making known to him their grave concern, from their own experience, over the shortcomings of the Social Security Bill? Will he, therefore, give an undertaking to meet them as a matter of urgency when he has seen the letter?

Mr. Newton: Yes.

Drug Counselling

6. **Mr. Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet the Association of Directors of Social Services to discuss in-service training for social workers on drug counselling.

Mr. Whitney: Yes, if it so wishes. I am in regular contact with the Association of Directors of Social Services.

Mr. Roberts: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that when he meets the association he will be told that because heroin and hard drug-taking in areas of high unemployment such as Merseyside has reached epidemic proportions the social workers and social services cannot cope? Because the

Government have created the conditions that have led to this escalation of hard drug taking by creating massive youth unemployment among teenagers and cutting the staff of the Customs and Excise, is not the onus on the Government to provide the resources to deal with the problem?

Mr. Whitney: If the hon. Gentleman refers to his officials in Merseyside, he will understand that they have taken advantage of a number of the many initiatives that we have set up to train professionals in coping with drug misuse. If the hon. Gentleman would also refer to the statistics on drug taking, he will see that the correlation between unemployment, full employment and the misuse of drugs has nothing to do with the point he is making.

Mr. Rathbone: Will my hon. Friend give the House a situation report on the appointment of drug co-ordinators in health districts with a view to furthering the training of social workers in drug counselling?

Mr. Whitney: I understand that liaison officers have been appointed in all health authorities. We have also now set in hand the arrangements for a drug advisory service.

NHS Management (Griffiths Report)

8. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implementation to date of the Griffiths report on National Health Service management.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): Implementation is proceeding well. All regional and district general managers have been appointed, as well as over two thirds of those at unit level. I expect the process to be complete by May or June this year.

Mr. Hughes: Will the Secretary of State take notice of the fact that there is some concern at the time it has taken his Department to approve plans for the devolved administration under Griffiths? Will he ensure that, if possible, that is speeded up in the months ahead? Will he reconsider whether nurses should be represented at management level and whether nursing directors should be appointed in each unit or area? Will the Secretary of State accept that the House would welcome an opportunity to debate the implementation of the Griffiths scheme?

Mr. Fowler: We have debated the implementation of Griffiths on a number of occasions. However, I would certainly welcome a further debate on it. On the issue of the speed of the process, I do not think that anyone has complained that there has been any delay in the introduction of general managers. On the question of nursing, let me make it clear that in most cases there are directors of nursing services. In every case there must be access to professional nursing advice. I want to see more nurses becoming managers, because I believe that they represent a tremendous professional asset to the service.

Mr. Watts: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the nursing profession's concern about implementation at unit level, and especially about the fact that in some large hospitals there is no professional nurse of greater seniority than a ward sister?

Mr. Fowler: I shall look at any such example. That is certainly not what has been reported to us. We would not want such conditions to exist. Forty three nurses have been appointed as unit general managers. As I have said, I should like more nurses to be appointed as general managers in the Health Service.

Mr. Pavitt: Why is the right hon. Gentleman brushing off all the expertise of, and the representations made by, the Royal College of Nursing? That is hardly a revolutionary body. Is he aware that nursing morale at ward level is at its lowest point since 1939? Is he aware that the Rayner and Griffiths reports have made a large difference to the bedside attitude of nurses because there is now a unit manager to tell nurses what to do?

Mr. Fowler: The hon. Gentleman is wrong about that. We are in no way brushing aside the concerns of the Royal College of Nursing. The college has accepted the principles of general management. We share its concern that those principles should be implemented in a way that enhances patient care. Inquiries such as that at Stanley Royd show the defects of the system that general management seeks to replace.

Mrs. Currie: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the campaign of the Royal College of Nursing, which calls in aid the coccyx, the humerus and other anatomical bits and pieces, is quite inappropriate? Does my right hon. Friend not prefer the statement of the National Association of Health Authorities that the NHS needs the best managers it can get, whatever the profession from which they come?

Mr. Fowler: That is right. I think that there is not a great deal of difference between the views of the Government and those of the Royal College of Nursing. We all want more effective management in the Health Service, because that is to the benefit of patients.

Mr. Dobson: If implementation of the Griffiths report is proceeding so well, why does the right hon. Gentleman think that the Royal College of Nursing has spent £250,000 on its campaign against it? Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that most sensible people, if they were in hospital, would prefer the nurse on the ward to turn for advice to a person who had qualified as a nurse rather than someone who had qualified at the London Business School?

Mr. Fowler: That is a rather silly comment. There have been a number of local cases in which the Royal College of Nursing was right to express its concern. The royal college and the Government believe in the general principle of the Griffiths reforms and in the introduction of general managers. I think that the hon. Gentleman would be the first to acknowledge that in a case such as Stanley Royd, where the present system has been going wrong.

Invalid Care Allowance

9. **Miss Maynard** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many married women have claimed invalid care allowance since the social security appeal tribunal decision on the Drake case.

14. **Sir David Price** asked the Sceretary of State for Social Services if he will take immediate steps to ensure that the invalid care allowance is extended to married women.

Mr. Newton: Up to 7 February the Department has received 10,220 claims from married women. A total of

786 of these claims have been disallowed because qualifying conditions other than marital status were not satisfied. We shall, of course, study the implications of the outcome of Mrs. Drake's case, but we have no plans at present to extend invalid care allowance to married women.

Miss Maynard: In view of the Government's response to the report on community care by the Select Committee on Social Services and their clear reluctance to extend the invalid care allowance to married women, what plans do the Government have to respond to the expected response of the European Court that exclusion of married women of working age would breach a European directive on equal rights in social security schemes?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady assumes a decision from the European Court which we manifestly have not yet had. We shall, of course, consider the decision when we get it. One problem is that if £85 million were available—that would be the cost of the hon. Lady's proposal—it is far from clear whether that would be the best way of giving additional support to those who are caring in the community.

Sir David Price: Would it not be more gracious of the Government to extend the right to that benefit to married women before they are compelled to do so by the European Court, especially as there is overwhelming support in the House and in the country to do just that?

Mr. Newton: Whether it would be more gracious or not, I hope that my hon. Friend, whose views I know and respect, and which have been expressed through his membership of the Social Services Committee, will reflect on my answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard), which was to the effect that £85 million might be used in a variety of more productive ways to support carers in the community.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Will the Minister confirm that, if Mrs. Drake's case succeeds, invalid care allowance will also be paid to unmarried women living with partners?

Mr. Newton: That is a matter that we would need to consider in the light of the precise terms of the judgment. The hon. Gentleman will know that in the ordinary course of events the social security system, unlike the tax system, treats co-habitation as being the same as marriage.

Mr. Meacher: If the Government lose the case in the European Court, does the Minister intend, rather then paying care allowance to married women to achieve sex equality, to achieve it by withdrawing the allowance from single women and men? Would that not be absurdly shortsighted and unjust, when the cost of care allowance with back-up services in the community is likely to be only a quarter to half the £350 a week that it now costs for institutional care, which is much less desirable?

Mr. Newton: In various exchanges with several hon. Members this afternoon I have done no more than make the basic point that the best thing that we can do for many carers is to ensure that further services are available to them and that that might be a better use of the resources involved.

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Occupational Pension Funds

10. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the detailed disclosure requirements for occupational pension funds.

Mr. Fowler: Proposals for disclosure of information were originally published in a consultative document in 1984, which was followed last summer by a further consultative document setting out the detailed proposals for regulations. Draft regulations have been considered by the Occupational Pensions Board, the comments of which we are still considering. The regulations will be laid as soon as possible.

Mr. Freeman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that too few members of occupational pension schemes know and understand what their pension benefits are? Will the Government join a national campaign to encourage occupational pensioners better to understand their schemes and benefits?

Mr. Fowler: I support what my hon. Friend says. The whole purpose of the Social Security Act 1985 is to give more information to scheme members, and we shall ensure that that happens.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that in the coalfields thousands of retired miners, and miners' widows, receive, as part of a pseudo-occupational pension, a coal allowance? Some others, who have to live in gas-fired accommodation, receive money in lieu. Will he withdraw the circular that went out to local authorities, which has resulted in housing benefit of up to £5 a week being taken away from the disabled of 70 and 80 years of age? Will he do that now?

Mr. Fowler: No, Sir. I will not. That supplementary goes remarkably further than the original question.

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams: Will my right hon. Friend undertake to give further serious study to the problem of achieving not only preservation but real transferability of pension rights for people in middle life and for senior management?

Mr. Fowler: The Government have already taken action in the Social Security Act 1985 to give transfer rights, and we shall do our utmost to give the right of transferability to scheme members. I am entirely at one with my hon. Friend.

NHS Hospitals (Capital Equipment)

11. **Mr. Chope** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he is taking to ensure that maximum use is made of expensive capital equipment installed in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: The implementation of the Griffiths report is improving and extending good management, part of whose job is to make maximum cost-effective use of all capital equipment.

Mr. Chope: Is there not a long way to go? Is my hon. Friend aware that in the Southampton health district alone some £5 million worth of modern X-ray equipment is used only between the hours of nine to five, five days a week?

Mr. Hayhoe: There is some way to go, and it would be useful if my hon. Friend discussed this matter with the chairman of his district health authority.

Civil Defence

16. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes to give guidance on the level of stocks required of first aid and pharmaceutical materials to be held at community first aid posts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Stocks of medical and domestic equipment are held in five depots managed by Crown Suppliers. Consideration is currently being given to the size of the stocks and ways and means of dispersal. Stocks of analgesics are held by some health authorities. These could form part of the provision for community first aid posts.

The question of stocks of drugs, pharmaceuticals, and first aid dressings required for the management of casualties in war is a complex one, and officials in a working group are examining this separately.

Mr. Leigh: Will those manning the first aid posts be adequately trained?

Mr. Whitney: Yes. This is one of the aspects that we are urgently considering.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Clwyd: In view of the unsatisfactory answers given by Ministers in the Department of Health and Social Security this afternoon, will the Prime Minister take immediate action to make severe weather payments available throughout Britain and improve the system before some old people freeze to death, or does she not care? How many people have to die before she takes some action?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady is aware, there were a number of questions about this matter this afternoon. The basis of severe weather payments was changed to that which was recommended — in other words, that they should be given at discretion. As the hon. Lady will also be aware, the cold weather payments are but a small proportion of the amount that goes towards helping pensioners and other people with fuel payments, and that has increased dramatically. Spending on help with heating has increased from £90 million in 1978-79 to £400 million this year under this Government.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the statement issued from her office this morning to the effect that she would welcome the establishment of new arrangements to take into account the view of the Unionists in Northern Ireland will be widely welcomed? Is she further aware that there is now no justification for the strike action that has been called in Northern Ireland for Monday? Will she join those on the Conservative Benches who believe that only constitutional and lawful action in Northern Ireland is compatible with democracy in this place?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. We had a useful meeting this morning with the leaders of the Ulster Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party, which included an offer to consider, as my hon. Friend said, new arrangements to enable Unionists to make their views on affairs in Northern Ireland known to the Government. They also agreed to consider certain other matters, which I have set out in more detail and put in the Library. I agree that there is no possible reason for a strike on Monday, or at any other time. I hope that the considerations that we raised this morning will be gone into deeply by the Unionists, and we hope to meet again in a comparatively short time when I have seen the leaders of the other parties in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Steel: What precise steps are the Government taking, before closing the bidding for Land Rover, to ascertain the views of the employees and management, and take them into account?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, by 4 March we need an indication of approximately the amount of those who are thinking seriously of bidding for Land Rover and Leyland Trucks. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry has seen some of the unions. It is mainly for the company to see the unions concerned. It is, of course, for the company to get the very best arrangements it can for the future employment of the workers, for future capital for the company, for the amount of the bid and generally for the future prosperity of the company as a whole.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the directors of Leyland Bus are endeavouring to lead a management buy-out consortium? Will she welcome this attempt to do what the Conservative party believes in, to encourage those working for the company to participate in a financial way in their future, and will she perhaps consider making the deadline of 4 March for Leyland Bus considerably more flexible than is the case?

The Prime Minister: Of course, all bids will be considered by the company and by the Government. I do not think that we can move the initial deadline. It is not to have the bid fully and completely worked out; it is to indicate where there is a serious bid and the amount, roughly, that it would be expected to be.

Mr. Kinnock: May I put to the Prime Minister the question being asked by thousands of BL workers and management, as well as millions of other people outside the company? Will she now use the power that we know she has to keep British Leyland and its constituent parts British?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman feels strongly — and I know that he does — perhaps he will influence some of the unions, which have very considerable funds, to put in a bid for the trucks — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Kinnock May I ask the Prime Minister why, after British taxpayers have spent so much in building up the technological base and promoting the advance of the whole corporation, she is so hell-bent on selling off to anyone at any price? Why does she not care enough about British industry to ensure that it stays in its present ownership—in the ownership of this county?

The Prime Minister: Because I believe that one of the functions of British industry is to contribute to the social services and not to compete with them for resources.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Will my right hon. Friend accept that many of us share her deep admiration for the Ford Motor Company of America, but will she also accept that, while Ford is expanding its spares division in this country because it believes that it is an important part of its profit base, it is unwise for us to be thinking of selling Unipart separately, so removing from Austin Rover and Land Rover an important part of their profit base? Should we not be even-handed and take Ford's advice and keep the spare parts division as the jewel in the crown?

The Prime Minister: I do not think that was quite the advice my hon. Friend was tendering when there was a possibility of exploring things with Ford. I am not sure whether he has had a sudden conversion. In fact, I think we are anxious to get as much privatisation as possible. There are requests to bid for Unipart, and I think that we must consider them properly.

Q2. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: I wonder whether the Prime Minister can help me. Is she aware that thousands of pensioners in Fife are freezing to death? How can I explain to them that they must accept a pension increase that will not buy two pints of milk, while at the same time she agreed, without a minute's hesitation, to increases of more than 40 per cent. for top civil servants, judges and admirals? How does she explain this? Is the more accurate explanation of that caring capitalism, or political thuggery?

The Prime Minister: I will compare this Government's record on help with fuel for pensioners with that of any previous Government, including the Government supported by the hon. Gentleman. I repeat what I said a few moments ago: spending on help with heating costs has increased dramatically from £90 million in 1978-79—the Socialist winter of discontent—to £400 million this year, an increase of £140 million in real terms. The increase in social security pensions announced yesterday follows the increase of £2·50 a week for a single pensioner and £4 a week for married pensioners announced last November.

Mr. Hayward: Will my right hon. Friend take some time today to welcome the installation of Mrs. Aquino as President of the Philippines? Will she also take this opportunity to thank the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for its efforts during this difficult period in protecting and keeping informed those who have relatives in the Philippines?

The Prime Minister: I shall gladly convey my hon. Friend's message to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. It will be nice for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to receive some thanks for its excellent work. The situation in the Philippines is not quite clear, but we understand that Mr. Shultz has recognised Mrs. Aquino as President. I am sure that we shall also wish her well as she embarks upon her task.

Q3. **Mr. Alton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Alton: During the course of the visit last week to the kingdom of Nepal by the Prime Minister's right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary, did he have an opportunity to raise the case of the 80 Christians who were arrested last year and who now face up to six years in prison for preaching Christianity and converting people to the Christian faith? If not, will the Prime Minister undertake to raise with the Government of Nepal the continued violation of human rights among Christians in Nepal?

The Prime Minister: I shall pass on the hon. Gentleman's message to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Q4. **Mr. Neale** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Neale: Is my right hon. Friend impressed by the tremendous efforts of British industry and commerce in increasing, as part of Industry Year, the preparedness of school pupils for working life? Does she recognise the great potential for extending these efforts by encouraging commercial organisations to participate in providing more scholarships and in providing finance for schooling?

The Prime Minister: There was a meeting yesterday of industrialists and other people who are involved in the technical and vocational education initiative. This applies to higher education at the moment. The Government have provided £43 million and industry has already contributed £24 million. The industrialists referred to the importance of providing in schools good training in mathematics, physics and chemistry. One of their objectives in Industry Year will be to take very much more interest in schools and to have much more contact with them to ensure that pupils show a greater interest in careers in manufacturing and technology.

Q5. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I have an assurance from the Prime Minister that no bid from Lairds for Leyland Bus that is based on stripping out the assets of Leyland Bus's three plants in the United Kingdom, with a view to securing the future of Lairds' own MCW operations in Birmingham—Lairds is a bus manufacturer—will be acceptable to this Government?

The Prime Minister: The Government have made it clear that they will consider all serious bids with a view to giving the companies concerned, including the bus company, the best possible future. That is our objective.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Is my right hon. Friend aware that General Motors has owned Vauxhall since 1925, that it supplied vehicles to our troops during the war and that

nationalistic attacks on this company are damaging the prospects of my constituents and those of other hon. Members?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that clear. I am sure we all welcome the employment and prosperity that General Motors provides, and will continue to provide, for our people.

Q6. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Prime Minister tell the House how she can possibly contemplate tax reductions for the very rich in her right hon. Friend's Budget next month when she can afford only 30p extra per week for a single person on supplementary benefit, 55p per week for a married couple on supplementary benefit, and a puny 5p a week for one-parent benefit? Would she care to come around the Croxteth district in my constituency to see how working people have to live, to see how the old and the disabled have to sustain themselves on the meagre sustenance given by this Government?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must contain himself in patience a little longer before he knows about the Budget. I am sure he cannot yet know, because I do not yet know. He must wait. I remind him that we have kept our pledges to the pensioners and have substantially reduced inflation, which is highly beneficial to the savings of pensioners. When the Labour party increased pensions there was enormous inflation and the Labour Government met some of the payments by reducing the value of savings to the pensioners. That was a dishonest thing to do.

Q7. **Mr. Speller** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Speller: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the great anxiety shown parents and teachers and by everyone in education about the continuing teachers' dispute? Has she any news of a possible break in the intransigence of the NUT?

The Prime Minister: I share my hon. Friend's concern. We are anxious for this dispute to be brought to an end. We hope that the ACAS arrangements will ensure a satisfactory conclusion, will stop the dispute and enable children to have full-time education again, and bring about a reasonable settlement for the teachers. I have no news yet about the NUT. I believe that we shall know the result of a ballot tomorrow, but I am not able to give my hon. Friend any more news about the NUT. I hope that if the other unions agree to the ACAS settlement, the NUT will follow suit.

Mr. Woodall: If the Prime Minister will not consider providing an extra heating allowance for elderly people during this exceptionally cold whether, will she consider enlisting the aid of my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) to see whether he can conjure up some warmer weather?

The Prime Minister: In addition to the £400 million that is available for heating, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, severe weather payments are available, not on the objective test which hon. Gentlemen did not like last year, but on a discretionary test which we have adopted on the advice of the appropriate advisory body. That is to try to meet the protests that were made last year.

Mr. Buchan: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I will permit it if it arises directly out of Questions.

Mr. Buchan: During questions to the Prime Minister she was asked about the attitude of her Government to the events in the Philippines. She distinctly answered that she understood that Mr. Shultz agreed with the present situation. While she is not content with flogging off our motor car industry, can the Prime Minister tell us whether she also intends to flog off the Foreign Office?

Mr. Speaker: That would be an extension of Question Time.

Nuclear Waste (Select Committee Report)

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker—and this is a legitimate point of order. We are about to have a statement from the Secretary of State for the Environment about the disposal of nuclear waste. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Select Committee on the Environment has produced a report on this issue. The Chairman of that Select Committee has already made major inquiries into leaks of that report and some of its proposals. The report is not due to be published until 14 March.

Will it be in order for a member of the Select Committee to ask questions on this statement that relate to the recommendations in the Select Committee report? I want to do that, but I do not want to be accused of breaching privilege and giving away the recommendations. If I am not allowed to ask questions, the Government's decision to announce their recommendations today in advance of the publication of the Select Committee report will be seen as an act designed to gag members of the Select Committee.

Mr. Speaker: We have not heard yet what the Secretary of State for the Environment has to say on the matter. If the hon. Gentleman asks a question that is related directly to what the Secretary of State has said, I cannot see how he will be in error.

Nuclear Waste (Disposal)

3.35 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement about the disposal of low and intermediate-level radioactive wastes.

Following the statement made on 24 January last year by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive, NIREX, has now completed its search for available sites to be evaluated for a possible near-surface facility for shorter-lived radioactive wastes. In addition to the site at Elstow already announced, NIREX is today announcing that it wishes to investigate sites near Fulbeck in Lincolnshire, Bradwell in Essex and South Killingholme in South Humberside.

I emphasise that at this stage NIREX will carry out exploratory geological investigations at these sites in sufficient detail only to ascertain whether they might be suitable. No proposal is currently being put forward actually to develop any of these sites. Indeed, if none of the sites is confirmed as suitable, none will be developed.

This exploratory geological work will, however, require planning permission. This will be sought from Parliament by way of a special development order, which my Department is today issuing in draft for consultation with the local authorities and water authorities concerned. A copy has been placed in the Library. We shall also consider comments from any others with an interest. We are not required by statute to consult, but on an issue of this importance and level of concern it is right to do so. I hope to lay the actual order before the House in April and there will, of course, be an opportunity for debate.

The types of work which the order will permit will be strictly limited. The order will cover the test drillings and soil sampling that NIREX will need to evaluate the geology and hydro-geology. It will also control operational matters, such as hours of working, and will require that NIREX makes good the sites once it has finished work upon them.

I understand that the investigation of the four sites could take between 12 and 18 months. If any of the sites prove to be suitable, NIREX would at that time be in a position to decide what proposals it wants to make the subject of a planning application.

I shall call in any such application for my own determination. It will be considered at a public inquiry under an independent inspector at which interested parties will have the opportunity to make their views known. NIREX will also have to prepare a detailed assessment of the likely environmental impact of its proposals for the inquiry. I would hope that the inquiry can begin in 1988.

If planning permission is given, the facility will still need a licence from the nuclear installations inspectorate. Furthermore, waste disposal will require authorisation by my Department and by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The House will wish to be aware that, if an inland site is selected, it may be necessary to establish a small separate coastal site for disposing of the reactor compartments of decommissioned nuclear powered submarines. These items will be best transported by sea and disposed of to a coastal site. To meet this contingency,

my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence intends to authorise exploratory work on MOD land, subject to normal planning procedures.

My right hon. Friend in his statement on 24 January 1985 also asked NIREX to start the search for at least three alternative sites for a deep facility for longer-lived wastes. In addition, the nuclear industry was asked, in consultation with the radiochemical inspectorate and the nuclear installations inspectorate, to seek ways of improving the conditioning of intermediate-level wastes for disposal. In seeking sites for a deep facility, NIREX will take full account of research into methods of containing the radioactivity in the wastes. It will in particular be examining the feasibility of deep-mined cavities for these wastes, possibly under the seabed. Work on conditioning continues. I shall of course keep the House informed on further progress.

I am well aware that people are anxious about the safety of the disposal of any sort of radioactive waste arising from the nuclear industry. These anxieties are, I believe, out of all proportion to the nature of the problems posed by disposal, and we and the nuclear industry must redouble our efforts to ensure that the general public are much better informed about the whole question.

We have a duty to ensure the safe disposal of radioactive wastes that already exist and which will arise in the future. The proposals announced by NIREX today are a necessary step to discharging that responsibility.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Will the Secretary of State accept that, whatever policy decisions may be taken in the future about nuclear power, we must recognise that the problem of existing radioactive waste has to be resolved? Bearing that in mind, will the Secretary of State accept that radioactive waste should be accessible and open to control at all times to allow present management policies to be reversed if necessary at some future date? Does the Department of the Environment's best practical environmental options study show that reversibility of policy can be included in the strategy at little extra cost?

The Government have made six previous statements on this subject and have still not arrived at a final policy position. Why has the Secretary of State made a statement now, when his Department's study of the best practical environmental options has not been published? Would it not have made more sense for the House and the affected areas to have had that information to hand before he made his statement? It is also true that the impending report from the Select Committee, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts), could have provided useful information. We are all aware that the Select Committee report will have some strong things to say about this and other aspects of nuclear policy.

While, as the Secretary of State said, the technical problems of dealing with low-level radioactive waste may be easily manageable, the social, economic and political factors are not so easily manageable. The Opposition share the right hon. Gentleman's views that the nuclear industry must produce a better performance in future. Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that simple exhortations to that industry to produce a better performance may not be enough?

As the statement does not make it clear, will the Secretary of State tell the House the location of the exploratory work to be carried out on Ministry of Defence land? The House is entitled to that information, as are the communities in the affected areas.

Will the use of a special development order and the Secretary of State's determination to call in any proposal, effectively bypass a proper role for elected local authorities? Will the right hon. Gentleman say how, with the combination of these two circumstances, the local authorities will participate properly in the decision?

The Opposition welcome the point in the statement which makes it clear that, whatever proposal finally emerges, an environmental impact study will be required. Is the Secretary of State also aware that we welcome the commitment in the statement to further research? Does that commitment not underline the foolishness of the Government's decision, shortly after taking office, to abandon the then existing research programme, especially into the provision of potential deep-mined facilities?

Finally, what are the Secretary of State's policy intentions towards the existing dump for low-level waste at Drigg? Is it now well established that current and past practices at Drigg are no longer acceptable? Will the Secretary of State ensure that those responsible for the tip at Drigg move as quickly as possible to a properly engineered trench and a far safer, environmentally acceptable means of disposing of the present waste?

Mr. Baker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his welcome recognition that there is a responsibility which must be discharged by the country in that nuclear wastes arise from a wide variety of activities in hospitals, laboratories, and various factories. There are some 5,000 registered sites where processes involving radioactivity occur. It would be highly irresponsible for any Government not to accept the responsibility to find a satisfactory and safe solution. I echo the points that he made about social and political factors being important.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the best possible environmental option and stressed the importance of the solutions being open and accessible, and possibly even reversible. The best practical environmental options study is a complex and important piece of work. It breaks new ground. It has now been completed. It also involves extensive consultations, especially with the trade unions, which have been completed, as I think he knows. I hope to publish the study within the next two or three weeks. It shows that there is a variety of safe routes.

We had hoped to see the Select Committee report in December or January. I do not criticise the Select Committee in any way, shape or form for the fact that the report is not ready. I think that it has been held up by printing matters. I felt that it was right to make a statement today to resolve the rumour and uncertainty which have grown since NIREX wrote to me in early January.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned Drigg which is in his constituency. The current arrangement at Drigg poses no risk to the public. Drigg has, however, been operating for a considerable time and there is now room for improvement. Drigg will therefore be upgraded. With effect from 1987, BNFL intends to introduce, first, the compaction of BNFL low-level waste; secondly, the emplacement of waste in trenches rather than tipping as at present; thirdly, the capping of the old trenches to make them impermeable to rainwater; and fourthly the renewal of the site drainage system. The result will be a much improved site.

[Mr. Baker]

I shall echo the point made by the hon. Gentleman at the end of his remarks. It is no good merely exhorting the nuclear industry to explain the position more clearly; it has a clear responsibility to do so, and so have the Government. The nuclear industry has been somewhat remiss in getting the matter over to the British public and allaying the anxiety over nuclear matters, which I recognise is very real.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): I see that my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip is present in his seat. He represents a constituency close to mine and I can imagine his feelings about the fact that such an unsuitable site as Bradwell should have been chose for testing. As by convention he cannot say anything at this stage, may I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment first to take note that we in Essex — formerly the major dumping ground for toxic waste originating outside our county—will not tolerate such a site in our county? Secondly, will he give the House an assurance that as soon as NIREX has established, as I am sure it will, that that site is unsuitable, he will make an anouncement to the House?

Mr. Baker: There is a well-known precedent, of course, that a Minister may make representations on behalf of his constituents on important planning matters, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip will do so. I accept what my right hon. Friend has said and appreciate that anxiety is felt in the localities that have been mentioned, along with an anticipated but unnecessary anxiety in some of the locations which have not been mentioned. I stress that at the moment I am proposing exploratory drillings, which will take 12 to 18 months. If, during the course of those exploratory drillings, any of the sites seem patently unsuitable, they will be dropped at that stage.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Does the right hon. Gentleman recollect the previous round of drilling programmes for high-level waste disposal? Will he recollect that the Government had to abandon that campaign as a result of the strong public objection by environmental groups in the areas that had been chosen? Does he anticipate the same result for this programme? Will the Secretary of State tell the House why the Government do not declare clearly for a containment rather than a disposal option?

Mr. Baker: Since the Flowers report of 1976 it has been the policy of successive Governments that nuclear waste should not be contained or stored at the site at which it arises but that it should be disposed of at an alternative site. That policy has been confirmed many times and it is the policy that I think is right. The very toxic wastes are contained either on site or at Sellafield. The hon. Gentleman asked about deep-mined facilities, but I would stress to him that we are dealing with low-level or intermediate-level waste where the radio-activity is quite short-lived. I hope that the fact that we are not dealing with very toxic substances in this operation will satisfy and in some way alleviate anxiety.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): How many lives have been lost in the nuclear industry in the past 30 years? Will my right hon. Friend also give an assurance that the prime consideration of the selection of sites will be public safety? Will my right hon. Friend state the proximity of substantial population to anyone of the sites which have been suggested?

Mr. Baker: That is clearly a matter of significance. I thank my hon. Friend for his past support and for recognising the fact that the Government have to make difficult, and in certain areas unpopular, decisions in discharging their responsibility. I assure my hon. Friend that my role as Secretary of State for the Environment is concerned with the environmental impact, and of course with safety. Safety is crucial in these matters. The standards which apply to new disposal facilities are set out in my Department's assessment principles, pubished last year. The overall target is that no individual should be subjected to maximum exposure of more than one tenth of the level set by the international commission on radiological protection.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Secretary of State aware that if there was a geological optimum and suitable site in the West Lothian constituency I would go up and down my constituency and argue for its acceptance —such is my confidence in the British nuclear industry on these issues? Why, why, why talk in terms of a coastal site for decommissioned nuclear unit submarines? Would it not be much simpler also to settle on a coastal site for nuclear waste rather than to raise up a hornet's nest of inland sites? The choice of an inland site by its very definition in the statement, means that there must be two bites at the proverbial cherry. It would be simpler to eliminate all inland sites and choose a coastal site so that one can overcome the problem not only of Conqueror but other unit submarines.

Mr. Baker: The defence sites require a much smaller area for disposal. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will, in due course, determine which will be suitable. It will all be done through normal planning procedures. The hon. Member has a reputation for courageous independence and I fully recognise that if a site was selected in his constituency he would campaign for it. The hon. Member recognises that this is a duty that has to be discharged and that it can be discharged safely. I thank him for saying that.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the unanimous and implacable opposition of the people of Humberside to the idea of nuclear waste being dumped anywhere in my constituency? Is he further aware that we shall fight a guerrilla war against the unelected and unaccountable body NIREX, and his Department, to ensure our victory? What must we show during the forthcoming period of consultation on the SDO to persuade him to amend it? When does he envisage naming one site that will be presented to a public inquiry? Why will the Government not seek alternative methods of disposal? Will my right hon. Friend say whether the NIREX statement on my local radio, that little notice will be taken of public opinion, is his view? Finally, I stand by my remarks in column 611 of *Hansard* of 21 February.

Mr. Baker: I am aware of my hon. Friend's strong feelings on these matters, and I can assure him that I have no proposals for a nuclear site in the Chiltern Hundreds. My hon. Friend asked me to consider alternative methods

of disposal. In my statement I said that we, together with NIREX, would consider the possibility of deep-mined cavities, especially those extending under the seabed. Sweden has devised that solution under the Baltic. I intend to visit that facility, and the other facilities in Europe, especially that of low-level clay disposal in France. Those options should not be excluded for different levels of waste.

My hon. Friend asked whether the SDO could be altered. Today I published it in draft form so that there could be widespread consultations with local authorities about its details. Once it is laid, it cannot be altered for six weeks. My hon. Friend asked when one site would be named to go to a public inquiry. Once NIREX has completed its geological investigations in eight to 12 months' time, it can decide what proposals it wants to make the subject of a planning application. As I told my right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine), if, during investigations, any of the sites appears patently unsuitable, NIREX will abandon it, to avoid prolonging uncertainty.

My hon. Friend referred to a radio interview this morning which I did not hear. However, this morning I heard the managing director of NIREX on the radio and he made it clear that, as regards taking public opinion into account, he would have mail shots to every house in each of the localities, and there would be public presentations and mobile exhibitions. It is extremely important that that process should be open and frank.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is it not the undeniable truth that Parliament treats the issues of nuclear waste as local authorities treat the issue of the Romanies and travelling people? Is it not clear that the British public will not live next to nuclear waste? Why does the Secretary of State not accept my recommendation of three years ago, two years ago and nine months ago that the Government should choose an off-mainland, coastal, island site in the Atlantic or Pacific, where — *[Laughter.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but we shall not find a site on our mainland. We must consider the issue realistically. We must find a site under international supervision. All the nuclear waste-producing nations should service it, fund it, and provide a bank there for all nuclear waste. Then the problem would no longer exist. That is the solution. In the end, the Secretary of State will have to choose that method, just as he has had to adopt a solution of that nature for the decommissioning of naval vessels.

Mr. Baker: The suggestion of the hon. Gentleman, who is also courageously independent in these matters, should be possible for high-level long-life wastes. Indeed, the feasibility studies on deep sea cavities under the seabed —that is, not dumping on the sea floor—which are in hand with NIREX and with which the Government will be associated, may be an answer for intermediate and high-level wastes.

The wastes that we are talking about are solid—they are not gaseous or liquid. They are such things as come from factory processes—they can be rubber gloves from hospitals, laboratory equipment and pipes or equipment used in any of the 5,000 sites registered for radioactive processes. We cannot just leave this stuff lying around. Much of it is low level, as the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) know. It can be dealt with adequately in shallow disposal in clay, as the French have done at Cherbourg.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that NIREX's proposals, at least in so far as they relate to inland sites, are based on the concept of absolute containment of the waste? Will he accept that I and my constituents regard it as deeply unwise even to consider putting such waste in such a crowded county as Bedfordshire, or in any other county? Does he agree that there is no site in Europe—neither the site at Centre de la Manche nor the proposed improvements at Drigg—which relies wholly on absolute containment? Both rely, at least in part, on fail-safe drainage to the sea. Will he continue to examine alternative proposals, not least dividing the treatment of low-level waste from intermediate-level waste and the better use of existing facilities, not least at Drigg, before he comes to any conclusions?

Mr. Baker: In 1984, following discussions between the nuclear industry, other waste producers and the Government, the radioactive waste management advisory committee, which advises me on these matters, agreed a classification scheme which was set out in its fifth annual report; copies of which are in the Library. The dividing line between low and intermediate-level wastes is now clearly defined.

As for containment, NIREX is basing its proposals on what is called the multi-barrier concept of disposal. It is designed to minimise the return of radioactivity to man by using several different types of barrier, which include the geology of the site, the construction of the facility and the conditioning and packaging of the waste. The waste is put in steel drums in sand and concrete. The drums are then put in concrete-lined trenches, embedded in clay and covered with sand and concrete and, finally, topsoil. The French are pursuing that method at Cherbourg. As for alternative facilities, I have made it clear today that we shall consider deep-mined facilities, especially for some of the higher and intermediate-level wastes.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Can the right hon. Gentleman give a categorical assurance that, despite the assistance that he has had from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), no sites in Scotland have been or will be considered for the dumping of nuclear waste?

Mr. Baker: NIREX was looking for possible sites for shallow disposal of low-level waste. That is the exercise on which it has been engaged during the past year. It therefore limited its researches to the clay belt of the country. The principal clay belt runs from south Humberside in an arc down to Dorset. That is why the selected sites lie within that area.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): South Killingholme is only 3½ miles from my constituency. Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we are to enjoy the abundant fruits of nuclear energy—cheap and plentiful power—low-level waste must go somewhere? Does he agree that it is sheer hypocrisy and humbug to say that it should go anywhere but on one's own doorstep? Does he agree that not one death has been attributed to the nuclear energy industry? Does he agree that the level of radiation from such sites is less than that which occurs naturally in many geological formations?

[Mr. Edward Leigh]

Will he reject the emotional claptrap and humbug and, after informed debate, put the site in the best geological position——

Mr. Michael Brown: Gainsborough?

Mr. Baker: I welcome my hon. Friend's courage. What he said at the beginning is absolutely right. We generate about 18 per cent. of our electrical power from nuclear energy. France already generates more than 50 per cent. of its electrical power from nuclear energy, and by the end of the century, that will have increased to 75 per cent. That will give France an enormous competitive edge in energy-intensive processing industries such as the chemical industry, heavy industry, food processing industries and paper-making. The cost of energy is vital to such industries. It would be extremely bad news for British industry if we surrendered an enormous advantage in energy costs to our continental competitors.

I welcome what my hon. Friend says. I must emphasise that the process will be subject to a full planning inquiry. As a matter of courtesy, I spoke to the Members of Parliament involved with the sites this morning. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is unable to be in the House, but he raised with me his anxiety for a full planning inquiry—Fulbeck lies in his constituency.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I remind the House that there will be a debate on this matter. I ask hon. Members to ask one question, or two at the most, or we shall get long answers.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that one reason why there is not confidence in what is proposed here, when the same is not true for other countries, is the constitution of NIREX? When he goes on his perambulations to other countries, he will find that the equivalent bodies there have on their boards representatives of the trade unions and environmentalists. Environmentalists accept that, even if nuclear power were stopped tomorrow, the waste would have to be disposed of. As for the deep geological disposal of high-level waste, is he aware that every other country identifies a site for experimental purposes to prove that it can be done? An undertaking is given that nuclear waste will not be disposed of at that site, so there is public acceptance. That is not being done here. No site will be accepted unless similar action is taken here.

Mr. Baker: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. It is an interesting point. What he describes does not happen in every country—France for example.

Mr. Dalyell: It is a very good point, though.

Mr. Baker: Well, it does not happen in France, and we cannot dismiss the French Government as indifferent to the safety of the French people in nuclear matters. Each country is beginning to fashion its own policies. Germany, for example, is going for very deep-mined cavities, principally using former salt mines. I shall see other possible means of disposal.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we are delighted that he has said that safety will be the crucial factor? In view of what he said about anxiety being aroused out of all proportion to the danger, does he think it regrettable that items in *The Sunday Times* for two consecutive weeks have given information which Dr. Jakeman now says is not entirely correct? Dr. Jakeman has described the articles as "not particularly helpful". They have, regrettably, aroused unnecessary public fears.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is right about there being many exaggerated fears, but I can understand them. There is a suspicion of all things nuclear. The country cannot say that it wants the benefits of cheap nuclear power but not be prepared to accept responsibility for dealing with wastes. I confirm what she said about safety being the prime concern. It is my prime concern. It is also clearly set out in NIREX's third report, in which methods of disposal are discussed. I shall ask NIREX to send copies to all hon. Members.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that his attempt to allay the anxieties of the nation, and especially of the people in the four counties chosen, will be reduced by his being perceived to be proceeding with unseemly haste to follow one option—near-land-level disposal of nuclear waste—when other options are available and there is time in which to make a choice? Why does the Secretary of State not wait and use the sites which already have nuclear installations and the cool-dry storage option until other options can be assessed properly, after all the evidence has been adduced?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, if he had not manipulated the planning procedures by introducing a special development order, there would not be a chance of planning permission being granted in any of the four counties that he has announced?

Mr. Baker: I am not quite sure what the policy of the Liberal party is on this matter. The policy of the Social Democratic party is clear and robust. [An HON. MEMBER: "Dr. David says no."] That is quite clear. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) was saying that this is an occasion when we should examine storage on site. That policy has been rejected by successive Governments since 1976, when it was agreed that there should be disposal away from the sites. The hon. Gentleman's party has not been in government since 1976 but he will remember that for two years it sustained the Labour Government in office and it was supposed to have a veto on all major policies. Why did it continue to support this dreadful and unacceptable policy for two years?

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Is the Secretary of State aware that many people would accept the theory that the nation cannot avoid facing up to the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste but that, when it comes to the practice, it is almost impossible to get any individual area to accept the siting of waste? Will he tell us what criteria led him to the selection of the four sites for further exploratory work?

Mr. Baker: This is not my selection; it is a selection made by NIREX, which is the combined company representing the nuclear industry in this country. It was looking at possible sites for shallow disposal of low-level and intermediate short-lived wastes. That inevitably led them to examine sites in the clay belt.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Where is the exploratory work on the Ministry of Defence land to

take place? Can my right hon. Friend give an assurance that the nuclear establishments in west Berkshire are not being considered?

Mr. Baker: I think that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. I will draw my hon. Friend's comment to his attention.

Dr. M. S. Miller (East Kilbride): Will the right hon. Gentleman accept that there is a great appreciation of his knowledge and frankness on this subject? His knowledge is very much in contrast with that of his hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), which is really ignorant posturing on the matter. Will the right hon. Gentleman also accept that part of the problem of public acceptance has been the cavalier attitude of scientists in the past who have not been open, frank and honest about the problem? Will he take steps to ensure that that does not continue?

Mr. Baker: I have great sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's last point. I think that there is a great gap between the scientists' perception of the problem and the general public's perception of the problem. I think that the scientists have felt that this is a minor problem which can be dealt with because they are familiar with the chemistry and the physics of it and in the past I think that they have given scant regard to the social and political problems of dealing with it.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State aware that, until a final decision is made, there will be anxiety on all four inland sites under consideration? As my constituency is adjacent to Bradwell, the constituents of Rochford will take a great interest in that decision. In addition, there is a large area of Ministry of Defence land in Rochford—Foulness—which may be a candidate for the exploratory work which the Secretary of State has referred to. Therefore, would he agree to name the sites for exploratory work as quickly as possible, so that anxiety can be reduced?

Mr. Baker: I have put maps in the Library showing the exact delineation of the sites where there will be test drilling. The drilling and the hydrological surveys will take place only in those confined areas.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): The Secretary of State has consistently made references to the French experience. The right hon. Gentleman will not recall, because he was not the Secretary of State at that time—but I am sure that the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government will tell him—the impact of the announcement on Billingham and its effect on property values and on prospective industrial development. Will the Secretary of State tell us whether he has in mind any form of subterfuge à la Francais—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. We conduct our business in English here.

Mr. Cook: —to indemnify the electorate in these areas should they be chosen for such disposal and it goes ahead? Is that to be part of his technique eventually?

Mr. Baker: The French have a way of dealing with these problems which involves certain areas competing to have a nuclear installation or a dump. I have set in hand various examinations as to advantages that could accrue to local areas. Our rating system is such that, when an installation of this nature, which it is difficult for the local community to accept, is running, it adds to the rateable value, but the money is creamed back again. I am looking at ways in which that can be done. *[Interruption.]* NIREX has already said that it is prepared to consider payments for properties which may be affected by planning rights.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): May I first express regret to my right hon. Friend that I was advised by the press six or seven hours ago that Fulbeck was to be considered? That is not very satisfactory, but I do not blame my right hon. Friend. May I advise him that it will be his task and mine to explain to the areas concerned that the methods proposed are safe? In that connection may I strongly suggest that, for the residents of Fulbeck, which is some four or five miles from my constituency boundary, a public relations exercise should be mounted promptly saying whether it will be low-level or intermediate-level waste which will be disposed of there, thereby allaying many of the fears which are naturally aroused?

Mr. Baker: I am sorry that information about the sites was leaked. It did not come from my Department, because several sites were mentioned which were not in the list that I received from NIREX in January. I take to heart the point that my hon. Friend has made that there must be an intensive effort at local level on the part of NIREX, the Government and my hon. Friend to explain the nature of the problem and how it can be resolved, stressing how important it is to deal with the safety aspects. I also understand his point about intermediate and low-level waste.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Why is the right hon. Gentleman so arrogantly dismissive of the views of ordinary people and why does he talk to them like children, saying that he will educate them and so on, when everybody knows that, as soon as an accident occurs in the nuclear industry, we get immediate lies to pacify us? Those lies are often remedied by the next speech. We know from Sellafield—a name which came about, God knows why, after Windscale, and there might be a third name yet—that nuclear waste is going into the Irish sea and that it is being dumped, to the fear of people on the coast of Ireland and Britain. We know that such waste is going around the country on the railways and we regularly learn of carriages carrying such waste which have come off the rails, as happened in Leeds on one occasion.

Why does the right hon. Gentleman think that the public's fears are not legitimate, when they know that if anything goes wrong the first thing the Secretary of State will do is distort the reality and try to convince them that everything is right, using the French experience as an example? Will he tell us the truth and tell British Nuclear Fuels plc and NIREX that it is time that they talked to us like adults and not as children, to try to lull us into a sense of false security?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman cannot have been listening to what I have been saying. He only wants to listen to things which support his own prejudices. I have made it clear that I am concerned personally and on behalf of the Government about the safety aspects of the matter. When dealing with these matters it does no good to use extravagant and exaggerated language. The nuclear industry is one of the most regulated industries in Britain.

[Mr. Baker]

Three main inspectorates deal with nuclear matters. The regulations are contained in 15 different Acts of Parliament. There are 145 nuclear inspectors.

Mr. Tony Baldry (Banbury): Does my right hon. Friend understand that, as one of those who has within his constituency a village that was rumoured to be chosen as a site, I am conscious that, however hard one tries to explain that low-level nuclear waste might be safe, there is still considerable fear about it? Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be a considerable planning blight, no matter how hard NIREX tries? Will my right hon. Friend make it clear as a matter of natural justice that the House will ensure that those who suffer from the effects of planning blight will receive compensation?

Mr. Baker: Loss through planning blight can be exaggerated. Various studies in the Bedfordshire area do not entirely support that claim. As I have made clear, NIREX has already said that, if property values are affected, it will be prepared to consider payments. I reiterate that it is important to allay anxieties. Some of these matters result from hospital work and from laboratory work. Furniture, gloves and paper towels are among the articles which may be affected by radioactivity. They may register a low level of radioactivity but, nevertheless, they must be dealt with. An understanding of the type of wastes about which we are talking might result in more collective acceptability of the fact that we must deal with this problem.

Mr. Georges Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that, as he took the responsibility in his statement for announcing that certain Ministry of Defence coastal sites will be examined with a view to disposing of wastes from decommissioned vessels, he has the responsibility for telling the House where the sites are? If the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to extend this courtesy to the House, will he at least tell us how those sites will be announced, so that hon. Members and the public know exactly where the sites are?

Mr. Baker: My responsibility, and the responsibility of my predecessors since 1976, has been principally for the disposal of civil nuclear waste. I accept the hon. Gentleman's comments. I shall undertake to bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence as, clearly, he has responsibility for these matters. I shall stress to my right hon. Friend the importance of deciding as soon as possible.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I accept that safety is a first priority and that the Government must make a difficult decision. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the opposition to the Killingholme site is not restricted to the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)? There is a great apprehension in my constituency, which is only three miles away as the crow flies. There is a feeling on Humberside that the north suffers enough disadvantages. Perhaps East Anglia, which is a favoured area, might be a more suitable site.

Mr. Baker: I note that my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary is not in his place to hear that comment. Humberside contains a large number of industries which are dependent upon a high use of energy. Those very industries would benefit from low-cost energy. I stress again that we are talking not about liquid or gas wastes but about solid wastes. These wastes will be contained in sand and concrete in steel drums which are then embedded in concrete-lined trenches and then surrounded by clay. I hope that my hon. Friend can persuade his constituents that those are adequate safeguards.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I assure the right hon. Gentleman that he has as much chance of inflicting the 300-year blight of this noxious nuclear nuisance on Humberside as he has of putting it in the back garden of Dunroamin in Dulwich. Is this list exactly the same as the one that was presented to the right hon. Gentleman on 8 January, or have changes been made? Is it just a happy coincidence that so many of the best possible sites for nuclear dumps happen to be owned by the Government or the Central Electricity Generating Board, or is it just that NIREX thinks that that will be all that it will be able to get away with after the mauling it received at Billingham? What is the right hon. Gentleman's real responsibility — is it to act as a messenger boy, using his almost dictatorial powers at the behest of NIREX, or is it to look now to development, planning, environmental and transport needs and to the interests and needs of the population in the areas concerned before it is too late?

Mr. Baker: Those last points are the very ones that will be explored in detail by the planning inquiry. As for the public as opposed to private sites, a private site in Billingham, which was owned by ICI—was considered, but the private owner withdrew. NIREX principally examined public sector sites. The hon. Gentleman has asked whether the list I have announced is the same list that NIREX recommended in its January letter. It is exactly the same.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): One need only mention the word "nuclear" to raise great fears. Although the nuclear industry is vital in providing energy treatment in hospitals, in research into health care, in industrial processes, and so on, does my right hon. Friend expect the people of north Humberside to accept the announcement in the light of that fear? Is my right hon. Friend aware that 50,000 signatures of people who oppose this proposal have already been collected? Does he agree that he will be flying in the face of reality? Before NIREX proceeds along this course, will we explore alternative solutions, especially the Swedish scheme for disposal under the sea? Why can the waste not be kept at Drigg until all the alternatives have been explored? What will my right hon. Friend do to inform the people of Humberside what this really means?

Mr. Baker: A feasibility study of the deep-mine facility is under way. It is principally concerned with higher-level waste and intermediate-level waste, which have long lives. The third report by NIREX and what is happening in other countries show that that solution is not considered to be necessary for low-level and short-lived intermediate-level wastes. My hon. Friend will be able to emphasise to his constituents that at this stage exploratory geological surveys will be taking place for 12 to 18 months. A decision has not been made on a particular site. I hope that a great deal of effort will be made locally to explain the exact nature of the problem with which we are trying to deal.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the statement not demonstrate that, whereas successive Governments were prepared to start on the development of nuclear power, decades later other Governments are finding it increasingly difficult to sell, even to some of their own Members of Parliament, the idea of getting rid of the waste? Why will not the right hon. Gentleman cut the losses in respect of nuclear power? Why does he not take on board the Labour party's resolution to phase out nuclear power stations? This would at least mean that future generations would not have to deal with the mess the right hon. Gentleman has got into. Will the right hon. Gentleman not treat Members of Parliament and the people outside with contempt by suggesting that this waste is all right and secure? If the waste is all right, why is he not putting it in Mole Valley? Why is he not recommending the constituency of Finchley? Why is the waste not being put in Whitehall? If the waste were so good and wonderful, the Americans would have submitted a bid for it long ago.

Mr. Baker: I thought that we were doing quite well with the Chief Whip's constituency. The hon. Gentleman is a well-known opponent of the whole nuclear power industry and of the generation of cheap electricity from nuclear power. If that policy were pursued, British industry would be at a grave competitive disadvantage towards the end of this century. As for safety, may I refer the hon. Gentleman to safety in the coal mining industry.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Is the Minister aware that, in response to questions about Elstow, NIREX has shown that it considers it not as a national site, but as a regional site? Is the Minister reluctant to use coastal sites because there are none available on Government property? Does he consider the facility as a national facility or must there be one in each region, especially in relation to Hinckley Point in Somerset, because that is a site shown on a map of original sites handed over to some people by NIREX?

Mr. Baker: The sites that will be selected eventually will be national.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In his original statement the Secretary of State for the Environment said that to meet the contingency, his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence intended to authorise exploratory work on Ministry of Defence land subject to normal planning procedures. That was said in relation to decommissioned nuclear-powered submarines. On the question of parliamentary manners, should not a Defence Minister have been present on the Front Bench to help the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was asked questions by my hon. Friends including my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)? Would it not be a good idea if we had a statement from a Defence Minister tomorrow, if only to quell the malicious rumour that they are sniffing out land in the Falklands for the Ministry of Defence site?

Mr. Speaker: I am not responsible for who sits on the Front Bench at any one time.

Private Members' Bills

4.33 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise three related matters, which arise from events that have occurred since yesterday afternoon.

This morning at 10 o'clock, an application was available for leave to introduce a Bill under the ten minutes rule, which, if introduced, would take place on Budget day. When I went to the place where queueing takes place outside the Public Bill Office yesterday afternooon, a Parliamentary Private Secretary to a Treasury Minister was queueing in that office—the hon. Member for Fyfe, North-East (Mr. Henderson). Slightly later in the day, another Treasury Parliamentary Private Secretary was in the room and subsequently two more Treasury Private Parliamentary Secretaries. At ten o'clock this morning one of those Parliamentary Private Secretaries secured the right to introduce a ten-minute Bill on behalf of the hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), who is Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor.

First, as I understand that the right to seek leave to introduce a ten-minute Bill is a Back-Bench right in Back-Bench time, is it in order that that right should be used by Government Parliamentary Private Secretaries to secure the right for themselves? Secondly, is it acceptable that they should do so in a way that has been arranged as a matter of departmental policy between the relevant Ministers? If that happens and a Bill is secured by that device, is it acceptable to the House or is it an abuse if the hon. Member who secures the right seeks leave to withdraw the Bill or withdraws it in the final days before it would be introduced, thus preventing anyone else from introducing a Bill?

Thirdly, if an hon. Member appears at a certain time to queue to introduce a Bill and is replaced, effectively handing over to another hon. Member, should the latest in the relay team secure the right for the Bill to be introduced? Alternatively, if there is an hon. Member who happens to arrive second, but is willing to queue continuously throughout the following hours during the day or night, should not that person, who has queued all the time, have the prior right to seek the leave of the House to introduce the Bill?

Mr. Speaker: I am obliged to the hon. Member for having given me notice of his point of order, because it has enabled me to make inquiries. I find that nothing untoward has occurred. Parliamentary Private Secretaries are Back Benchers and the parliamentary tactics to which the hon. Member has drawn my attention have been going on for many years, since before I came here.

Severe Weather Payments

4.36 pm

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the provision of adequate heating payments to pensioners and other claimants in need in view of the exceptionally severe weather now being experienced throughout the country."

The matter is important, because not only is this one of the coldest Februarys on record — it is estimated that this may be the coldest February for more than 300 years — but the system of exceptionally severe weather payments devised by the Government to meet those circumstances is in complete disarray and is unworkable. Only one quarter of DHSS offices have officially declared the weather "severe", even though the exceptional cold has been registered throughout almost all the country with temperatures of minus 10 to minus 17 deg C being widely experienced. Designation of exceptionally severe weather conditions has been left to arbitrary local discretion. Even in the coldest areas, no advertising of the payments has been undertaken, so nobody knows that they are available and nobody who is entitled receives them.

The matter is specific, because people are dying of hypothermia. Every year, the number of deaths is increasing. In 1978 it was 42, and according to Government figures it was 329 in 1984 and no fewer than 415 in the first half of 1985 — the latest figures. This February will undoubtedly produce the worst mortalities for 50 years or more. Even so, the figures understate the numbers at risk. The latest thorough survey discovered that one in every 200 elderly people — more than 50,000 pensioners — had a deep body temperature below 95 deg F, which is the threshold for hypothermia. Those people are now at risk.

The matter is urgent, because whilst we are now three weeks into a severe cold spell, the weather today with a severe easterly wind is markedly colder still. According to the Metereological Office, which I have checked, almost all areas are today almost 5 deg C colder than during a normal February, the coldest areas of all being in East Anglia, the Midlands, South-West England and South Wales.

The Government's exceptionally severe weather payments system has broken down and 50,000 elderly people and young babies in cold households are at risk of dying. The death rate from hypothermia is already remorselessly rising. I submit that the matter should be debated by the House as a matter of urgency to ensure immediate extra aid for heating where it is most needed —in the coldest households.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the provision of adequate heating payments to pensioners and other claimants in need in view of the exceptionally severe weather now being experienced throughout the country".

I have listened with care to the hon. Member's submission and I listened to questions on the statement yesterday and at Question Time today, but as the hon. Gentleman knows, my sole duty when considering an application under Standing Order No. 10 is to decide whether the matter should be given priority over the business set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that the matter that he has raised does not meet all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order, so I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Member is not going to question my decision.

Mr. Winnick: I do not question your decision, Mr. Speaker. I recognise that you do not like continual applications under Standing Order No. 10 on successive days. Regardless of the indifference of Conservative Members to the suffering of the elderly, will you, Mr. Speaker, accept that so long as the present cold weather continues, there are bound to be further applications under Standing Order No. 10, because this is an issue that deeply concerns us, although obviously it does not concern Conservative Members? There may well be another application tomorrow or Thursday, and I hope that you will not say that this is an abuse of House of Commons time.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is putting a hypothetical question. I shall have to wait to see what happens. I also take into account other opportunities, such as Opposition time, to raise such matters.

BILL PRESENTED

TOBACCO PRODUCTS (TELEVISION BROADCASTING)

Mrs. Ann Clwyd, supported by Mr. Harry Ewing, Ms. Harriet Harman, Dr. Oonagh McDonald, Mr. Clive Soley and Mr. Laurie Pavitt, presented a Bill to prohibit the mention or display in television broadcasts of the brand names, colour, logos or other identifying characteristics of tobacco products; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and order to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 April. [Bill 92.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Documents Nos. 9576/82 and 7719/84, a draft Directive and Amendment on the use of sewage sludge in agriculture, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the Inshore Fishing (Prohibition of Carriage of Monofilament Gill Nets) (Scotland) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 60) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

Renewable Energy Sources (Promotion)

4.40 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): I beg to move, that leave be given to bring in a Bill to establish an independent commission responsible directly to Parliament for the research, development and demonstration of clean renewable alternative sources of energy.

This is not an attempt to further the interests of what my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) once called

"eco-freaks and the friends of the foxgloves".

Rather, it is a genuine attempt to promote

"a much more flexible approach to the energy future in which the essential ingredients are diversity of energy supply, economy of energy supply and efficiency of energy use."

Those are not my words but the words of the Under-Secretary of State for Energy when he addressed the House on 25 October last year, the only time that a full-length debate has been dedicated to the issue. The Under-Secretary's first requirement forms the basis of the first paragraph of my proposed preamble to the Bill, which refers to the need for diversity and flexibility of operable energy supplies, leading into a fully integrated system of distribution being clearly recognised and universally accepted.

My second paragraph refers to the known reserves of fossil fuels and hydrocarbons being finite, with a predictable point of exhaustion in time. It is generally thought that North sea gas will be effectively worked out by the mid-1990s, and that North sea oil will be exhausted not long after that. Known reserves of coal will last much longer, but the prospect of its wasteful application is covered by the third paragraph of the preamble, which says that such fossil fuels can be put to much better use as foodstock, for fertilisers, plastics, chemicals, aviation fuel and the like rather than for wasteful combustion as a mere source of heat.

That view is supported by the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) who said in the debate:

"hydrocarbon fuels . . . are far too precious to burn. They have premium uses . . . they must be conserved."

That view was further confirmed by my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Dr. Miller) who reminded the House of Mick McGahey's assertion:

"the last thing that we should want to do with coal is burn it."

The fourth paragraph of my preamble is about the operation of establishments using nuclear sources and servicing the nuclear power industry, which is currently giving rise to ever-increasing anxiety and concern over possible adverse effects on adjacent communities. I do not have to remind the House about Sellafield, but I add the names of Trawfynydd, Burghfield, Harwell, Rosyth, Faslane, and Aldermaston and media speculation linked with these establishments.

The fifth paragraph refers to unforeseen incidents at nuclear establishments, which have also been the cause of jusifiable speculation about the possible health and safety consequences for workers at such plants and their families. Recent reports bear witness to the validity of this paragraph.

The sixth paragraph refers to the disposal of irradiated waste created by the operation of plants handling nuclear elements, which has created grievous problems for the industry in terms of public response and levels of acceptability as some communities perceive them. The response to today's statement on the disposal of radioactive waste is a simple testimony to this concern.

Paragraph 7 refers to the fact that nations other than the United Kingdom are already making gainful applications of British research and technological developments in inquiry into renewable sources to add to the total energy supply. My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Eadie) quoted David Ross, an eminent commentator on these matters, who reported that Norwegian authorities, applying the multiresonant oscillating water column technique developed in this country, claimed that electricity had been generated at a cost per kw hour of 3·4p on an appliance made for demonstration purposes only and not scaled for the most cost-effective operation. This is less than 20 per cent. of the original target figure of 20p per kw hour set by the Department of Energy when the wave research programme first began.

Paragraph 8 refers to the potential benefits to the economy issuing from the successful development of renewable sources, which would be enormous in terms of job creation and training needed to provide adequately for such new employment. In today's employment climate, one need hardly say more.

Paragraph 9 refers to the potential economic, ecological, social and political benefits made avilable for Third-world development, which would be immediate and accelerating. No caring politicain can afford to ignore that potential gain.

Paragraph 10 refers to previous efforts to further progress in the research and development of renewables being deprived of impetus and starved of incentive by the attitudes of parties with interests vested in already established and traditional fuel sources. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) drew attention to the report of the Select Committee on Energy in the 1983-84 Session and in the debate last year. The report, in referring to the energy technology support unit, the agency responsible for fostering research and development of "renewables", said that the

"spread of experience would have to be widened to include more specialists with non-nuclear backgrounds."

My hon. Friend had been told

"that most if not all of the people involved in the ETSU have had careers in the atomic industry."

The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) posed an interesting question in that debate. He asked:

"What is the role of the Central Electricity Generating Board? I suspect that it, not the Government, gives the thumbs down to alternative energy schemes."

Is there a need for an independent commission? The hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) said in the debate that previously the allocation of funds for energy research and development had been weighted heavily in favour of conventional fuels. He continued:

"Is it not more logical to supply rather more funding for these clean and renewable alternatives instead of continuing only with the vast amount of funding that is directed . . . to fission and fusion technologies? Unfortunately, we leave so very little finance available for the very alternatives that may in future become necessary."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1985; Vol. 84, cols. 577-625.]

This month, David Ross told me that the Sizewell inquiry revealed that in 1978 the CEGB circulated an internal memorandum that said:

"The use of renewable energy sources for electricity generation is likely to be less economic than nuclear power. Nevertheless, it is important to explore these alternatives, in order both to satisfy ourselves that nuclear expansion is fully

[Mr. Frank Cook]

justified, and to demonstrate this to others, since groups opposing nuclear expansion have made substantial progress in the past few years."

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Order. There are no interventions in a ten-minute Bill speech.

Mr. Cook: The nuclear industry and the CEGB stand condemned by their comments. They find the answer in the back of the book and invent the work to suit. Only this week, the Secretary of State for Energy is quoted in *The Observer* as saying:

"One of the problems of the nuclear industry is that it is very inbred. We need a generation change from the people who built it up in the 1950s."

On previous occasions when I have made the accusation of the incestuousness of the industry, the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Local Government has taken me to task for it. It is interesting to see that the Secretary of State for Energy seems to be agreeing with me, because I fail to distinguish between inbreeding and incest.

The Under-Secretary of State told the House:

"As a nation we waste £7 billion per year on energy. We must cut out that appalling waste."

He went on to say that it is

"not a case of dusting down the older technologies and constructing wooden windmills . . . We are talking here of 'state of the art' technology . . . working on the frontiers of science. It consequently takes time and much effort to evaluate the individual technologies and to identify those which can make a . . . contribution to United Kingdom energy supply."

He continued:

"The Government's attitude towards alternative sources of energy is responsible and imaginative."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. 577-625.]

That may be so; I will not take issue, but I will say that the attitude also needs to be unbiased and without prejudice. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields on the same occasion expressed his feelings.

For these and for many other reasons, I seek leave to introduce a Bill to establish an independent commission responsible directly to Parliament for the research, development and demonstration of clean, renewable alternative sources of energy.

4.51 pm

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): I oppose the Bill. The Bill is not about permission to set up windmills; it is not even a thinly disguised attack on the nuclear industry —it is a quite open attack on the nuclear industry. It has nothing to do with energy flexibility and everything to do with consistency with the Labour party's policy to halt the nuclear power programme and to phase out all existing nuclear plants.

It should be clear to us today how much we all depend on nuclear power for everything from street lighting to medical treatment. If leave is given to the hon. Gentleman to introduce the Bill, we shall in effect be encouraging yet another attack on the nuclear industry and all those who work in it. They work in it in a spotlight. They work to exacting standards. It is precisely because those standards are so tight that the slightest deviation or error in meeting them is so widely reported and so openly publicised.

That said, how many died in the nuclear industry last year as a result of radiation? Nobody died in the nuclear industry. How many have died in the coal industry in the last ten years? The total is 443, an average of 44 people a year. An average of 28 people a year die in the engineering industry.

The Bill, if enacted, will undermine a major British industry which directly employees some 40,000 people and expects to employ another 55,000 people over the next 10 years if the Sizewell and PWR programme is approved. It is a major source of jobs in areas of high unemployment, in Tyneside, Teesside, Cumbria and Northumberland. It is a major export business for the country. Companies such as David McKee, NEI and Whessoe in the north-east are three major export earners.

It is clear from the presentation of the Bill that on energy matters the Opposition are the enemy of jobs. The Bill, if enacted, will destroy jobs and put people out of work in Tyneside and Teeside. It will certainly demonstrate to all those who work in the nuclear power industry that the biggest threat to the industry is not safety standards which they can meet but the policy of the Opposition to end the entire programme and wipe out the jobs which depend on it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Frank Cook, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. Alex Eadie, Mr. Michael Foot, Mr. Jack Dormand, Mr. Peter Hardy, Mr. Ernie Ross, Dr. David Clark, Mr. Tony Speller, Mr. James Wallace and Mr. Paddy Ashdown.

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES (PROMOTION)

Mr. Frank Cook accordingly presented a Bill to establish an independent commission responsible directly to Parliament for the research, development and demonstration of clean renewable alternative sources of energy: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 7 March and to be printed. [Bill 93.]

Rates

4.54 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): I beg to move:

That the draft Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th February, be approved.

This year, as last, the rate limits to which we are seeking the House's approval fulfil the single most important aim of our rate-capping policy—to protect the ratepayer. Rate-capped authorities and their supporters poured scorn on the leaflet we produced in autumn 1984 which carried this message in its title. They responded with a flood of propaganda and howls of outrage. But the message was true. And it remains true for ratepayers in rate-capped areas in 1986-87.

Because of the effects of the transfer of services after the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties, we cannot this year compare the local rate with the local rate last year. But in five of the rate-capped authorities, the general rate — that is, the total paid by ratepayers—next year should be lower than in the present year and in two cases should be a virtual standstill on the 1985-86 rate.

The average domestic householder in Islington will save £134 next year and a householder in Haringey will save £80. The Labour party treasurer will be delighted to know that he will be saving £11,000 on the Southwark party offices. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) will have an extra £20 in his pocket.

Rate bills should fall for the second year in succession in three of the rate-capped authorities — Southwark, Islington and Lambeth—and in all cases the rates bill will undoubtedly be lower than it would have been if authorities had been allowed to spend next year as they wished.

The average householder in Islington will be saving a massive £502 compared with the rate Islington has told us it wants to charge, while another well-known Islington inhabitant, Arsenal football club, will be saving £38,000 on its Highbury ground. The Labour party would otherwise by paying an extra £72,700 which, I am told, it can ill afford, and the hon. Member for Blackburn an extra £120. The University of London, which faces an annual rate bill of around £14 million, will be saving £200,000 on the senate house and University college alone, thanks to the restraint we have imposed on Camden.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Is it true that the University Grants Committee grant to the University of London, which represents a reduction in the amount of funding to the university, will be considerably greater than the saving the Minister has just mentioned?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman rightly says that the University Grants Committee has much less money than it would like to spend, but if he thinks that is helped by Camden putting up the rates to spend on its objectives, he seems to me to be farther off beam.

When we debated the equivalent order last year, we did so in an atmosphere — putting it at its mildest — of controlled hysteria. Very few Members were present in the Chamber, and all the Opposition Members were hysterical, although not my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who was his usual calm self. The Labour-controlled authorities selected for rate capping had sworn a policy of intransigent opposition both to the operation of the rates legislation and to their general obligations to set a lawful rate — and indeed to the policy of the Opposition Front Bench. Opposition Members once again terrified the House with predictions of the dire effects of rate-capping and the horror that should strike the heart of Government at the prospect of the authorities' defiance.

The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), that well-known exponent of understatement, declared in the debate:

"The Secretary of State is creating a tragedy and a constitutional crisis that he, this Government and the Department of the Environment will live to regret till the end of time".—[*Official Report*, 25 February 1985, Vol. 74, c. 82.]

The Government and my Department are flattered that the hon. Member should regard us as immortal. This is encouraging.

Needless to say, what happened was rather different. The policy of united confrontation—now no more than a footnote to history — collapsed in disarray. By July 1985 all of the rate-capped authorities had seen reason and set a rate. Nevertheless, some of them took so long to do so that they attracted the unwelcome attentions of the district auditor.

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): The Stonefrost report recommended that to avoid illegality the city of Liverpool should increase its rate. I recommended as strongly as I possibly could to the Liverpool labour group that it should avoid illegality by increasing the rate. Furthermore, Environment Ministers urged Liverpool, in speeches in this House, to avoid illegality by increasing the rate. Why is the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government now rate-capping Liverpool and preventing it from having the option in the next financial year of avoiding illegality and cuts in services?

Mr. Waldegrave: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the order he will see that we are recommending a rate increase for Liverpool.

The public utterances that we hear this year are all different. Councillor Knight, the leader of Lambeth, has said that this year his council will levy a rate within the rate limit, that it will not impose a deficit budget and that it will set a rate before the beginning of the financial year. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) must have explained the facts to him. Liverpool city council is on record as having given similar assurances. However, in Liverpool's case it was not the hon. Member for Copeland, whose communications with the council are just a little strained, who explained the facts to the council. On this occasion it was the gnomes of Zurich. Liverpool city council gave commitments to the bankers of Switzerland.

When it came to the statutory processes that are involved in the second year of rate limitation, the culmination of which we are debating today, the policy of a united front against the Government and in defiance of the Rates Act 1984 was a very dim memory. Far from refusing to have anything to do with the Act, quite sensibly, the majority of the authorities — Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Lambeth, Lewisham, Liverpool and Newcastle—took the opportunity offered by the Act to apply to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for

[Mr. Waldegrave]

the Environment for a redetermination of the expenditure level that he announced for them last July. They discovered that the procedures worked perfectly fairly.

My right hon. Friend announced in December that as a result of the applications that he had received, the expenditure levels for seven authorities, upon which rate limits were to be based, had been increased. After my right hon. Friend's announcement in December of proposed rate limits, all the authorities concerned took the opportunity to comment on the proposed limits. One authority—Newcastle—agreed to the proposed maximum. That is why Newcastle is not included in the order.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) and I have had meetings with eight of the authorities to discuss their representations on the proposed rate limits. My right hon. Friend has considered all the representations that the authorities have made but he considers that, in all the circumstances, an increase in any of the proposed limits is not appropriate.

Let me make clear to the House the purpose of our exchanges with the rate-capped authorities. Some authorities claim that by proceeding with today's draft order we are deliberately frustrating their attempts to negotiate with us in some way, on a higher rate limit. That is wrong. The Secretary of State's function is to seek to reach an agreement with the authorities over a different maximum. In doing so, he will consider the representations made to him by the authorities in order to discover whether it is possible to reach agreement on a higher maximum. If, after due consideration, he concludes that it is not possible to reach agreement, it is no part of his role to go on haggling until everyone is exhausted. Against that background my right hon. Friend has considered all of the representations that have been put to him and has decided to proceed with today's draft order.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Is the Minister able to say whether one London borough—Southwark—which did not apply before the provisional rate was set in December but which decided to apply for consideration by the Government on the day before the final date, 21 January, can draw from the fact that there was no change in the rate limit that was provisionally announced in December the conclusion that, had it applied between October and December, there would have been no increase in the maximum level at which it would have been allowed to set its rate? The Minister knows that all the other boroughs had their rate levels increased, following an application at that stage. Could Southwark have gained that benefit had it applied at an earlier stage?

Mr. Waldegrave: The information that Southwark gave to us was fully considered. If it had put different information before us over a longer period, we would have considered it. It is difficult to answer a hypothetical question, but those authorities that gave us the greatest amount of time in which to consider the issues behaved in the most sensible manner.

In the event, it will undoubtedly be claimed that the resulting rate limits that are contained in the order imply the usual draconian and unreasonable cuts. However, I urge right hon. and hon. Members to remember that the House has had the benefit of speeches of that kind on many occasions. Last year we were told that services in the affected areas would be decimated and that thousands of jobs would disappear.

The most memorable example of this type of claim was the series of advertisements that was placed in the press by the Association of London Authorities. Its most imaginative advertisement featured at the top a life-sized photograph of a rat. Underneath it ran the headline

"One of the few beneficiaries of rate-capping."

The text of the advertisement went on to say that rate capping would lead to cuts in a whole range of services: meals on wheels, day care for the mentally and physically handicapped, street lighting, public health inspection, waste disposal, street cleaning, renovation of poor housing and pest control.

Less colourfully, as is his wont, the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) who wound up for the Opposition this time last year claimed that his local authority, Lambeth, would be able to live within the rate limit only by sacking employees. He begged to know what would happen to the 4,000 pensioners, the 5,000 people in Lambeth with home helps, the 1,500 people receiving meals on wheels and the 1,700 people who attend luncheon clubs. What has happened? I checked the matter and found that all 17 of Lambeth's pest control officers are still in post. The ill-fated rate-capping road show, supported by Lambeth ratepayers to the tune of £54,000, has proved to be so unenticing to the people of the borough that it has been abandoned. The cost to Lambeth ratepayers will be much higher. That little venture will cost them about £117,000.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Is the Minister aware, first, that the Government were successfully sued by Lambeth borough council for having got its expenditure limits wrong last year and that they were increased by £8 million? Secondly, is he aware that Lambeth received a substantial sum of money from the Greater London council? That sum of money was very helpful and came from the distressed borough fund. Thirdly, is he aware that a great deal of money came to Lambeth because of the change in the housing subsidy arrangements? Housing subsidies were made available from a sinking fund. That made quite a difference. Why does the Minister have to decide these matters rather than the voters of Lambeth?

Mr. Waldegrave: We had that argument in principle about the Rates Act 1984. The Government's view is that in some of these areas the self-balancing mechanisms of local democracy do not provide a fair balance, and we are putting before the country fundamental reforms for the longer term in order to meet the underlying problems.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): We heard earlier today in answer to questions to the Department of Health and Social Security that 51 per cent. of the population of Liverpool and 57 per cent. of the population of Manchester are on housing benefit. It is all very well talking about the voters, but it is the taxpayers, not the voters, who pay.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend addresses the central purpose of the reforms that we have put before the country in the Green Paper. We are trying to bring into closer balance in the longer term those who pay and those who use local services. That must be the way forward.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden and I held meetings with the rate-capped

authorities during the last few weeks we made the point of asking each authority what cuts in services they had made during the last year. Not one authority claimed that it had made large cuts in services or jobs. On the contrary, a number of them spoke with pride of the fact that they had got through the year without making cuts and that in some areas there had been a growth in provision.

My right hon. and hon. Friends may want to know what this paradox means. First, it means that last year we faced a cynical and hysterical campaign about cuts. That campaign had no basis in fact. In fact, so cynical was the campaign carried out by one borough, Islington, that the leader of the council received complaints from her own public relations unit that it had been asked to put out misleading publicity on the effects of rate capping on jobs and services.

Secondly, the fact that rate-capped authorities have escaped without making cuts this year means that those authorities had large reserves of ratepayers' money, some part of which we have compelled them to return to their rightful owners. But that cannot continue for ever. The cry that we now hear from the rate-capped authorities is that the rate limits that we have proposed for next year will require them to make savings in spending—and about time, too.

The aim of rate capping is to force economies in spending on the excessive spenders in order to restore a more reasonable balance between the interests of ratepayers and the provision of services. If it is vital for all authorities to secure good value for money in the provision of services, is it not doubly important for rate-capped authorities, many of which face very severe problems, to make the necessary value for money savings that they can? All of these authorities, which caterwaul about cuts, have plenty of room for savings. The examples may by now be over-familiar, but that will not prevent me from referring to them again and again until the message gets through. There is the Islington housing clerk who sits at home on full pay—£150 a week—doing nothing because of "blacking" by the National and Local Government Officers' Association which the council will not resist.

There was a £200,000 overspend by Islington on the publicity budget, and £20,000 was spent on subsidising council employees to brew real ale. Lambeth was paying people £2 an hour for the delight of coming to hear Mr. Knight and his colleagues make their speeches. *[Interruption.]* The normal argument is to say that these are small figures, and I think I hear an hon. Member saying that very thing. Here is a figure that is not small. The authorities covered by this order are owed £57 million in rent arrears. That is a scandalous waste of money which could be used to deal with the real problems of those boroughs. What is more, the figures for so-called cuts that authorities are claiming for next year are almost invariably measured against budgets from which, in reality, no economies have been sought this year and which include proposals for real growth next year. Even those authorities that knew as early as last July that they were selected for rate capping again in 1986-87 appear to have made no effort whatever to make the one cut that is necessary—to cut their coats according to their cloth.

Rate-capped authorities and others have also supported spending this year with payments made by the GLC from its so-called "stress borough" programme to which the hon. Member for Norwood referred. It is clear that all the London rate-capped authorities have used this money to support the existing level of spending in the full knowledge that that source of funds would disappear, and after last July, that all but one were selected for rate-capping again in 1986-87. A number of authorities have said that we should not contemplate setting a final rate limit given the uncertainties, as they see it, surrounding the costs that they will inherit after the abolition of the GLC. We reject that argument. The question is whether any of the remaining uncertainties need to cause rate-capped authorities any concern.

The London Residuary Body today resolved the major uncertainty by announcing its levy and charges for 1986-87. For some months the LRB has been discussing with boroughs its proposed budget, as have the residuary bodies in the metropolitan county areas. My hon. Friend has considered carefully the implications of the residuary body budgets for the rate limits he has proposed.

Another uncertainty is the destination of GLC balances. That uncertainty can only work in favour of rate-capped authorities in London, and all London authorities can look forward to some share in the distribution of remaining GLC funds, whatever the outcome of the present action being brought by the City of Westminster. This benefit will be over and above their income from rates and grants. Thus, the argument about uncertainty falls.

It is against that background that my right hon. Friend has laid the Order we are debating. The rate limits it contains are reasonable and fulfil the aims of the House when it passed the Rates Act two years ago. As my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) has said, the Government are committed to protecting hard-pressed ratepayers who have no effective lever to restrain the high spending of their local authorities. Until proper local accountability is secured, and as long as a handful of local authorities continue to push up spending with no thought about the effects on those who finance their extravagance, central Government will have to act to restrain their excesses. For those reasons I commend the order to the House.

5.12 pm

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): The House is being asked to approve an order to control the rates and budgets of 11 elected local authorities. Those authorities were elected by almost 2·5 million people. The authorities are Basildon, Camden, Greenwich, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Liverpool, Southwark and Thamesdown. The combined budget of those authorities totals £1,103·5 million. Newcastle upon Tyne was also designated under the Act, but has chosen to set a rate below the maximum the Secretary of State would have imposed, thus retaining some of its independence.

Twenty other local government bodies have their budgets and precepts controlled from Whitehall. They include six police authorities, six fire authorities and six passenger transport authorities in Tyne and Wear, west Yorkshire, south Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and the west midlands. The Inner London education authority and the London fire authority have their precepts limited by Government control. That illustrates the expanding nature of the creeping centralism of this Tory Government.

I make it clear that the Labour party remains fundamentally opposed to this attitude towards local government in general and to this Act in particular. In

[Dr. John Cunningham]

govenment, we shall abolish it. It remains my view that Whitehall and Westminster are ill-equipped to deal with these matters. This House is not the place to fix the rates of any one elected local authority in Britain, let alone to those of 11 councils all at the same time, as this order proposes.

The British people do not believe that civil servants and Ministers are well enough informed or have the understanding, let alone the right, to enforce decisions that should be taken in our town halls. Increasingly, evidence shows that better, more effective and more efficient decisions can be taken locally, and those conclusions are substantiated by the reports of the Audit Commission.

In introducing this order the Minister of State made a calm speech and projected a reasonable manner. It was as if all is well and there are no problems. That was the general impression that one gained from his speech, and that was the mood and message he wanted to convey not just to the House but to the country. I reject all that, and I also reject Government claims for this Act and its effects. Those claims have always been unfounded, as are the ideas behind the legislation, which we regard as untenable.

In announcing his decisions on 13 February, the Secretary of State in a press release from his Department said:

"For the second year running, our policy has succeeded in protecting ratepayers."

It is worth examining that claim for a moment. Which ratepayers have been protected and at whose expense?

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman say how the Labour party would control local authority spending, or does it not believe that local authorities should be controlled in any way? Will the hon. Gentleman also say how he would protect those ratepayers who are charged savagely increasing rates in those local authority areas where the majority of people are in receipt of housing benefit?

Dr. Cunningham: I thought I had made it clear at the beginning of my speech that we do not accept the provisions of this Act and we shall abolish it. I deliberately said that at the beginning of my speech in order to avoid the sort of intervention we have just had. We do not believe that local authority rates should be set in Whitehall, fixed by Ministers, or controlled by Westminster. We have made that clear since the Second Reading of the Bill which became this Act, and I shall make it clear at every available opportunity. We shall return those freedoms and rights to democratically elected local authorities of whatever political control.

Mr. Marlow: Who will protect the ratepayers?

Dr. Cunningham: I am dealing with the Government's claim that they are protecting the ratepayer. That is wholly false. Last year in Britain average domestic rates rose by 9·5 per cent., virtually twice the rate of inflation. This year the rises in many cases will be much higher than that. The major reason why rates have risen so much under this Government—by over 140 per cent.—is the massive and consistent reduction in rate support grant. Rate support grant has been reduced from 62 per cent. of councils' current expenditure under the last Labour Government, to about 46 per cent. now. No Conservative Minister can honestly claim to have protected ratepayers.

The deliberate intention of the Prime Minister's policy has been to switch national burdens from taxpayers and from high income earners on to the rates. That has been the policy and will continue to be the Government's policy. As we saw in the rate support grant report, approved by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and others just a few weeks ago, that remains the Government's intention.

This year, to disguise the implications of the policy, the Government have robbed the county councils of at least £220 million, which is the figure that has been produced by the Association of County Councils. That sum has been taken from the shires to help rate-capped authorities, and that is shown by the Government's figures. In 1984-85, London authorities' share of total grant-related expenditure was 18·6 per cent. In 1985-86, their share was increased to 19·7 per cent. In 1986-87, it is projected to increase to 20·5 per cent. The share of metropolitan areas outside London has remained static. However, there has been a corresponding fall over the same period in the non-metropolitan areas' share of total grant-related expenditure, which has fallen from 56·2 per cent. to 54·5 per cent. These figures have been produced by the Government in response to my questions.

Government figures show also that the percentage of block grant given to rate-capped authorities has increased in 1985-86 compared with the previous financial year. The Government have been transferring resources from non-rate-capped authorities to rate-capped authorities. That is the effect of the Act. That is what we said when the Bill, as it then was, was passing through the House. That is what is happening and that is what continues to happen, and that is why the Government's claim that they are protecting ratepayers is false. The Government are protecting one small group of authorities at the expense of all local authorities. As they are reducing the size of the cake in addition, it cannot be said that ratepayers are being protected. Ratepayers are being betrayed by the Government's policy.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that the hon. Gentleman would like to have much more total grant as he would like to have more public expenditure under every head, as would his party. I am grateful for his confirmation, which is rather important and which is now on the record, that we have protected what he has described as a small group, which we are now debating.

Dr. Cunningham: The Minister's use of "protected" is interesting in this context. It is right that under the Rates Act resources have been brought back to designated authorities. However, their rates increased in the first place because large sums were taken from them. Until the last financial year the GLC, for example, had received no grant from the Government. That is the principal reason for the position of designated authorities being so bad.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman said that the Government have switched their revenue raising to local government, from central taxation to the ratepayer. We all know that. What the hon. Gentleman has not said is how he would intend to protect the ratepayer from the extravagant local authority, particularly in those areas where the majority of people are receiving public support through housing benefit.

Dr. Cunningham: The debate is focused upon Government policy, not Labour party policy. However,

the Labour party remains content that decisions on local expenditure in the form of rates should be determined at local elections through the ballot box. It is not in the least frightened or concerned that the Labour party in local government will have to put its record to the test and ask voters to decide the issue. The reality is that the Tory party is running away from that long-held principle in our democratic society. It is undermining the principle that local communities can elect local authorities to serve them and then make a judgment of their performance at the appropriate time by voting. That has always been our position and it remains so.

This is the second year in succession in which county council ratepayers have been lumbered by Tory party policy. For 1986-87, the finance precepts in the shires demonstrate the argument that I am advancing. I shall refer to some Conservative-controlled county councils to underline that high rate increases do not occur only in Labour-controlled authorities. Conservative-controlled Berkshire has announced a 13·1 per cent. increase in its precept for the coming year. Conservative-controlled Buckinghamshire has announced a 30 per cent. increase while Conservative-controlled Dorset, Hereford and Worcestershire, Lincolnshire and West Sussex have announced increases of 20 per cent., 10·9 per cent., 22 per cent. and 19 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is my hon. Friend aware that Conservative-controlled Sefton council is heading for a massive 26 to 30 per cent. rate increase? It would be interesting to know why Liverpool has been rate-capped at 15 per cent. while Conservative-controlled Sefton, which is next door, is being forced by the Government, through the RSG settlement, to increase its rate by 26 to 30 per cent.

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I shall deal with the issue which he has raised later in my remarks.

Against the background which I have set out, it is easy to demonstrate that Conservative claims, which have been reiterated this afternoon, about protecting ratepayers are false. Lower rates, if they exist in rate-capped authorities, are being financed by higher rates in the shire counties. The basis of rate capping is an above-average increase in expenditure targets for designated authorities, which brings budget and target closer together, thereby reducing penalties and earning the authorities considerably more RSG than in the previous year.

In the current year, there was an average increase in targets for authorities designated under the Act of 16·4 per cent., compared with a national average increase of only 6·2 per cent. This more favoured treatment resulted in an additional £116·5 million of grant going to designated authorities. These tactics cannot be sustained, nor can the claim that the Government are protecting ratepayers pass even the most cursory scrutiny. The claim is clearly untrue. There are especially strong arguments this year——

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman seems to be trying to argue in every direction and to have his argument in every way. He claims that the Government are transferring more grant to meet city problems, which I understood was a policy which he supported and which helps ratepayers in the city areas. He then claims that those ratepayers are not being helped. I am slightly confused about which side of the argument he is on. The hon. Gentlman veers from one side to the other.

Dr. Cunningham: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman is confused.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am confused only by the hon. Gentleman's argument.

Dr. Cunningham: Support for the Act from the author of "The Binding of Leviathan" demonstrates his confusion perhaps better than anything else. The Government are claiming that by helping a tiny proportion of ratepayers to a marginal extent they are protecting ratepayers in Britain as a whole. I say that all the evidence demonstrates that that claim is false. As long as the Act remains in operation, such claims will remain false. They will remain false also for as long as the Government persevere with their expressed policy of cutting RSG year after year. If the Minister cannot understand that, I am sorry. As he has been an Environment Minister for such a long time, he has no excuses for not understanding my argument.

There are especially strong arguments this year why the interim provisions of the Act should have been implemented. A number of authorities, including Liverpool, asked the Secretary of State to set interim maxima for the rates, as he could have done, pending discussion and, we hope, the solution of a number of problems. The Minister has claimed that the uncertainty is being resolved, but that is not the view of local authorities. There is much uncertainty over budgets for the coming financial year for the metropolitan authorities because of the problems associated with the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan councils. The fact that these problems remain within four or five weeks of the authorities going out of existence demonstrates how ill-prepared the Government were and how ill-thought-out the legislation was for the regrettable abolition of the authorities.

There is an acknowledged error in the block grant calculations for 1986-87 which has a major effect on London boroughs and may well have an effect on other authorities. At least two authorities are about to start legal proceedings against the Secretary of State. There is an injunction covering the GLC funding to boroughs which the Minister of State mentioned in his speech. The Government, we argue, are being unnecessarily hasty in placing the order before Parliament, given the important, unresolved matters. There is no good reason why interim provisions should not have been used while these matters were being resolved.

It is worth reminding the House that many of the councils affected are among those which represent the most disadvantaged boroughs and communities. For example, on eight measures of relative deprivation, Camden appears in the top 50 six times. Greenwich appears three times, Hackney six times, Haringey five times, Islington six times, Lambeth six times, Lewisham five times, Liverpool six times, Newcastle four times and Southwark seven times. These authorities and communities have particularly difficult and deep-seated problems. Many of them are inner-city communities. These authorities are being penalised and prevented by the Government and the legislation from getting on with the job that they seek to do.

[Dr. Cunningham]

The boroughs were chosen for designation on an arbitrary and unfair basis. The criteria that were used to make the designations were at best unfair and at worst nonsense. For example, comparing the increase in cash growth for those authorities with that of the Conservative-controlled county council of Buckinghamshire, Buckinghamshire's increase in expenditure can be seen to be larger over a period of years, than those of many of the authorities designated. Simply by choosing particular criteria, the Secretary of State is able to trap the authorities that he wants to trap and leave out of the control of the Act the authorities that he does not want to designate.

The spending targets for individual authorities have been completely discredited and the Government have announced that they intend to abandon them. The Minister of State told the House that all would be well and that because nothing very serious happened last year the situation would be the same in the coming financial year. Because of the uncertainties I have mentioned, it is far too early for anyone, including Ministers in the Department, to give any clear impression of the likely effects on local services and jobs in the coming financial year.

The Minister's equanimity and sanguine approach are not shared by local authorities—including the officers in the local authorities — and are not shared by many voluntary organisations in London and the metropolitan areas. Funding for the voluntary sector is now in a very serious plight. Uncertainty about that funding has meant that many organisations have already had to issue redundancy notices to their staffs. There are two main methods by which voluntary organisation are currently funded through the GLC and the metropolitan counties. The transitional funding arrangements for schemes within single boroughs and districts and joint arrangements for cross-borough district schemes after abolition have been discussed. For both these arrangements, the resources available are massively reduced compared with current spending levels.

A total of £66 million worth of bids for transitional funding were submitted to the Department of the Environment by local authorities in October 1985. Only £20 million has been allocated, with wide variations between areas in their levels of allocations. Most rate-capped boroughs received only 27 per cent. of their bids. For example, in Hackney the bid is £5·6 million, but the provisional allocation is only about one fifth of that sum. In Southwark the bid is £2·7 million, but the allocation is less than £500,000. In Camden the bid was £4·4 million and the allocation was only just over £1 million. The same situation obtains in Lambeth.

I am sorry that the Minister of State does not appear to be listening to me, but it is important to get an up-to-date view from the voluntary organisations since the Government made promises to the voluntary organisations and they made promises in another place, which enabled them to get the abolition Bill through that House. It was on the basis of those promises that much of the legislation was agreed. The Government have now comprehensively reneged on their promises.

I spoke today to Mr. Martin Hall of the London Voluntary Service Council. He said:

"The Government is showing frightening complacency with regard to the fate of voluntary organisations. The Richmond scheme in London for funding London-wide voluntary bodies, is moving very, very slowly. There are currently applications from 700 GLC funded London-wide bodies, 510 of them in the non-arts field of voluntary work."

At the conclusion of a meeting to be held tomorrow, a total of only 130 applications will have have been dealt with. There is to be a further meeting of the Richmond scheme on 20 March when a maximum of a further 80 will be considered. Another meeting has been arranged, but is not planned to be held until 17 April when perhaps a further 80 applications will be considered. Of course, 17 April is long after the date when the GLC will have ceased to exist.

In other words, at most 40 per cent. of the applications from voluntary bodies will have been dealt with nearly three weeks of the new financial year already past. What future does that offer for the voluntary organisations and the people that they employ?

On transitional funding, only 22 London boroughs out of the 30 which submitted bids, have had complete notification of approved projects. The Department of the Environment has so far rejected 32 projects, 16 of them in the London borough of Camden alone.

That is the sorry state of affairs with respect to transitional funding to the voluntary sector. Councillors in many of the boroughs controlled under the order are expected to find the shortfall in cash to make up for what is happening as a result of the abolition. That is simply not on. It is not possible and Ministers know that.

I said that Liverpool, in particular, had sought an agreement from the Minister to the publication of an interim order. Liverpool city council has written to the Secretary of State on several occasions, asking for a redetermination of its rates limit. Why have the Government consistently refused, given all the problems that Liverpool has faced, to talk about that possibility? It is scandalous, given the other difficulties that the city council faces, that the discussions have not even taken place.

Discussions on Merseyside about transitional funding and what is to happen, have reached a pretty sorry state, as the *Local Government Chronicle* recently reported. The *Local Government Chronicle* quoted County Councillor Keva Coombes, who said:

"The co-ordinating committee has been split 3-2 on practically every issue. The only thing they agreed on is that Wirral MBC should keep the register of performing animals in Merseyside."

The only agreement

"It appears that there are no performing animals in Merseyside although politicians did not lose the opportunity to make a few gibes at their opponents."

That is amusing and entertaining, but it shows that the Government's policy of reaching agreement with the boroughs to take on the responsibility and to find the money to finance those projects is not working within five weeks of the authorities going out of existence.

Despite all that, we learn from the *Financial Times* and elsewhere that the Government intend to tighten their grip even further, eroding more freedoms and removing flexibility from local authorities, acting under the instructions of the Treasury. We believe—I hope that the Minister will deny this and I shall happily give way to him — that legislation already exists to take further control of local authorities' capital receipts. The Government are now apparently proposing a massive new series of curbs to remove the flexibility enjoyed by local authorities on capital, creative accounting, housing repairs and non-prescribed capital expenditure; and, if that is

dragged into prescribed expenditure, it will produce massive difficulties for local authorities with major housing repair problems.

We understand that schemes of deferred purchase, leasing and the cascade arrangements are all likely to go. All those things will create major new difficulties for local authorities. When the hon. Lady, the Under-Secretary of State, replies, will she tell the House whether, despite all the objections, the Government intend to enforce their new accounting procedures on local authorities? They will again remove flexibility and impose further controls from the centre. As Ministers are aware, those proposals have been bitterly opposed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. I understand — perhaps Ministers will confirm this — that the chairman of the Audit Commission has also written to the Secretary of State bitterly opposing those proposals. We should like some answers to those questions. I am sorry to see that the Secretary of State does not know, but perhaps Ministers could clarify the point amongst themselves and talk quietly with the Box. We can then have an answer when the hon. Lady replies.

The Minister said something about the events of last year. I agree with him. Many of the most calamitous claims of people in local authorities were not well-founded. Some people's fears were not borne out. That does not mean that it has been easy for local authorities. It would be wrong and foolish to conclude that because that happened last year, it will happen in the future, especially in view of the additional controls that we believe the Government intend to use.

In addition, during the past 12 months there has been an unprecedented volume of litigation. Councils have been taking the Secretary of State to court again and again. The Government, committed to reducing the role of the state, are increasing and expanding the role of the state in affairs which would be far better left to local authorities.

The order is unsupported by any explanatory material. In the documents available to the House there is no justification for what the Government propose.

I can, perhaps, sum all this up by quoting Mr. Malcolm Grant, the senior lecturer in law at the University of Southampton who said—I agree with him—about the Rates Act 1984:

> "Rate capping cannot be regarded as more than a short term expedient. It represents an extreme attempt to maintain control over a block grant system which is fundamentally flawed. The block grant arrangements have manifestly failed in their objective to provide a rational means of financial support for local government services which will balance the needs and resource of the different local government areas. That much is widely recognised, not least by the Audit Commission, by the Comptroller and Auditor General, and"—

finally and belatedly—

"by the Government".

The Opposition have an entirely different view of what the local authorities' role and priorities should be. As Conservative Members have expressed an interest in our views, let me make them clear. We believe that elected local authorities should be major representative political institutions in a plural democratic society. They should provide valued public services for the protection and well-being of all citizens. They should be a means for people to participate in self-government at local level. Of course, there is and always will be tensions between central and local authority. How we deal with those tensions is an important test of how well we govern.

In the absence of a written constitution, the relationship between central and local authority has never been clearly defined. That means that significant changes imposed by the Government have been able to be enforced. Local accountability has, far from being enhanced, been continuously eroded.

In recent years, we believe that that relationship has become unbalanced, with central Government taking more powers of discretion and control away from local government, reducing its role and freedom.

We believe that the country faces a fundamental choice. Is local government to be vested with genuine local autonomy and its own responsibilities and distinct legitimacy, based on elections and the ability to raise independent revenue, or is it merely to be the agent of central Government? The Labour party remains committed to genuine elected local government with its own revenue-raising powers, the income from which should be free from central control.

We remain determined to enhance freedom, the role and the functions of local government. We shall modernise and restructure local authorities. We shall strengthen the position of elected local councillors. We shall work for a constructive and developing partnership between a Labour Government at Westminster and local councils to improve the quality and range of community services for all our citizens.

It is for those reasons, and because of the shambles that the Government have created, that we ask the House to reject the order.

5.47 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): I welcome the opportunity to explain why I support the rate limitation order as it affects my constituency, and remind the House of just how successful the new town of Basildon is. Without fear of contradiction, I can say that I am privileged to represent what is today regarded as the finest and most dynamic town, not just in the south but in the whole of the United Kingdom. All roads lead to Basildon. The development corporation has done a magnificent job under Dame Elizabeth Coker and Mr. Douglas Galloway's stewardship in transforming the dreams and aspirations of thousands of displaced Londoners into the reality of a new town. Not everything they have done is perfect—I fully appreciate the resentment and anxiety felt by original Basildonians — but, given the task that it was, the development corporation has achieved much of which to be proud.

The development corporation's task is not completed. I ask the Minister to repeat to the Minister responsible the fact that I believe that it is too soon to wind up the corporation on 31 March. I am also worried by the representations that I am receiving about the number of compulsory purchase orders that have been imposed in the Laindon area. I hope that the development corporation will be allowed to continue a little longer.

Basildon has the largest covered shopping centre in Europe, which has brought many new jobs and increased prosperity to the constituency. It is also planned that Basildon shall have the largest covered sports stadium in Europe. Such a prestigious sports centre would be used to stage many great sporting events. During the past 12 months two new police stations have been opened in Laindon and Pitsea. When I was elected to the House, Basildon had the worst crime rate in Essex, but I am

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delighted to say that that is no longer the case. In the past year we have enjoyed a great reduction in the number of crimes committed, while the police have enjoyed the best crime prevention and detection rate for the whole of Essex. Great credit should go to those responsible for that wonderful achievement.

Basildon has excellent communications and these have been enhanced by the opening of the M25, the future expansion of Stansted and the prospect of the Channel tunnel. The best news for Basildon is that over the past 12 months unemployment has fallen by 5·8 per cent. There are many reasons for this, but the role of the development corporation in attracting new business cannot be undervalued. However, there are still not enough jobs for those who wish to work, nor will there be if high rates are allowed to continue to destroy jobs, especially in small businesses.

This is the second consecutive year in which Basildon's rates have been capped. The present context for the rate capping is different from that of last year. Last year's limit was met with a mixture of relief and disappointment by my constituents. The council had wanted to increase rates by 33·66 per cent. but instead there was a rate increase of 17·59 per cent. This year my constituents are delighted by the fact that the limit has been set at 4·8 per cent., which is less than the rate of inflation. A number of businesses and many families who have recently arrived in my constituency will stay on the promise that the burden of rates will be reduced. They are pleased that the Government have shown good faith this year.

Last year Basildon district council, along with all the other rate-capped authorities, did not use the Government's appeal procedure—a collective Socialist view was taken on the appeals procedure. The council embarked on a massive public relations exercise to discredit the Government's action with its "Let's defend Basildon" campaign. All of this was launched at the ratepayers' expense. This year the council has adopted a much quieter approach. I understand that out of the 12 capped authorities, seven have appealed against the decision and all have received more money.

It is noticeable that Basildon was not one of the authorities to appeal in spite of the fact that the authority maintains that it has been unfairly capped. The leader of the council has claimed that there is no appeal procedure. I wonder whether the Minister would comment—now or when she replies — on what interpretation could be placed on the actions of an authority that has claimed that it is being treated unfairly but yet refuses to use the appeals procedure. I wonder whether it has anything to do with the fact that the authority has substantial reserves of more than £3 million and did not even spend up to its budget of last year.

The Audit Commission report on Basildon highlighted a number of interesting points and showed that considerable savings could be achieved. The report showed that Basildon spends 197 per cent. more on steet sweeping than other comparable authorities—we must presumably vacuum our roads. Basildon spends 164 per cent. more on parks and open spaces, 142 per cent. more on sports and recreation and 122 per cent. more on concessionary fares. This is all very nice until one remembers that somebody has to pay for these services.

Perhaps the most extraordinary and damaging expenditure was that spent by the council on public relations. By any standards it must be regarded as going over the top for a district council to need to employ 12 people in its PR department. That service cost £307,800. There was more to this than meets the eye. I am indebted to the organisation Campaign Against Council Corruption for bringing various matters to my attention. The organisation found out that the local authority responded to an advertisement in *Marxism Today* and decided to employ a PR company at a further cost to the ratepayers of £146,000. When questioned, the authority stated that there was no ulterior motive and that no bias would be shown in its dealings with the PR company.

CACC asked the PR company, Union Communications, about its services and it eagerly sent a letter stating what a marvellous company it was and how it worked closely with constituency Labour parties— for instance, in Basildon. The company said it had shown Basildon council how to increase the Labour vote by 10 per cent. This is abosolutely disgraceful. I am sure the House will understand that with this sort of nonsense continuing at ratepayers' expense my constituents——

Dr. Cunningham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman giving way, especially since he has spent a large part of his speech making allegations and attacks on an elected Labour council. In view of what he has said, how can he explain the Audit Commission's view that Basildon is a well-run authority? How does he explain that the electors of Basildon continue to elect a Labour council?

Mr. Amess: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has drawn my attention to these matters.

Dr. Cunningham: Answer.

Mr. Amess: I will certainly answer. Union Communications came after the audit report. I had a completely different interpretation of the Audit Commission's report on Basildon. We spent 150 hours in Committee discussing the Rate Bill and I remember that it was clearly shown that the Audit Commission considered that there were many areas in which the local authority could find savings without affecting all the necessary services of Basildon. The hon. Gentleman has referred to my attacks on an elected Labour authority yet the first quarter of my speech was spent stating what a fine town I represented. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman can also defend the unmitigated and never-ending attacks that have been made by the council on the duly elected Member for Basildon.

Dr. Cunningham: The hon. Member will not be that for much longer.

Mr. Amess: The hon. Gentleman says that I will not be the hon. Member for much longer, but I would remind him that in 1983, four weeks before the general election, in the local elections, I lost the one Conservative councillor in Basildon. The Labour party got 52 per cent. of the total votes cast. Four weeks later I was elected Conservative Member of Parliament for Basildon. If I were the hon. Member for Copeland — much as the Labour party intend to continue sending what it considers front line speakers to my constituency—I would not bank on the result in 1988.

If ever there was an example of a local authority speaking with a forked tongue it is that of Basildon over

its involvement with City institutions. The local authority, which never loses an opportunity to castigate the City, has now established a company called BEDCO. The company has been paid, under section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972, a grant of £65,000 a year for employment initiatives. Basildon community trust has had £380,000 paid to it for grants for three years for various bodies. BEDCO has announced that it wants to borrow £15 million from City institutions for various projects, for example Basildon astrodome, which has recently featured in the media. Furthermore, the council wants a borrowing facility with City institutions of £14 million—£8 million for a theatre on a deferred purchase scheme, and £6 million to develop various community facilities. The council's official spokesman said that all those enterprises would be embarked on at no extra cost to ratepayers. That is absolute nonsense. My constituents would eventually face huge interest charges, and future generations of ratepayers would have to bear debts. That is disgraceful, irresponsible action.

The council faces a wages and salaries bill of £10·7 million. Seven hundred thousand pounds is to be spent on developing computer technology, yet staffing levels will remain constant. Last year the welfare rights advisory service spent nearly £350,000. The local authority, instead of concentrating on mastering the provision of services for which it is responsible, seeks to interfere in areas where it has no power to act. There is a cabin in Fodderwick car park which houses the so-called self-support group, monitoring something over which it has no power.

The latest issue of *Link* contains a questionnaire asking people whether they are satisfied with the provision of their children's education. It is many years since the district council was responsible for educational provision, which is now provided by Essex county council, which was not consulted about the questionnaire. That is further evidence of the disgraceful public relations exercise on which the council has embarked. There was never any input from the five elected Labour county councillors in educational matters. They have only now become interested because some worried parents came to my surgery and because they wish to take advantage of the teachers' dispute for electoral mileage.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman referred to local authority expenditure on promoting the take-up of welfare benefits. Does he think that everybody in is constituency is receiving the benefits to which they are entitled? If some people are not, who is responsible for improving the take-up?

Mr. Amess: I would like my constituents to take advantage of the benefits available to them. I do not think that the district council is giving my constituents the right information about the benefits to which they are entitled, and I shall demonstrate that. The information is misleading them. It is the responsibility of the authorities administering the benefits to——

Mr. Dobson: But those authorities are doing nothing.

Mr. Amess: Then we must encourage them to circulate more information. The district council should concentrate on mastering the provision of the services for which it is responsible before interferring in other areas.

I shall now demonstrate my point. From 1 April, Essex county council will abolish home help charges—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I note that that meets with applause from Opposition Members. Yet Basildon council's welfare rights service is apparently confusing people by telling them to stop paying now. There is no overall control on Essex county council because it is a hung council, and we are quickly seeing the increased spending consequences of not having firm political control of the council.

I have heard it argued that the money spent on welfare rights could be better spent on at least 20 extra social services workers controlled by the responsible authority and providing much needed, constructive assistance in Basildon. The cynical attitude of Basildon council was highlighted when a discussion document was leaked from the Labour group about its problem of coping with a constituency which was becoming more Conservative in its voting pattern. The conclusion amounted to possible recommendations to the Boundary Commission to rejig seats in such a way as to keep the local authority under Labour control. That is disgraceful cynicism.

The White Paper on the reform of local government finance has been warmly received in my constituency, as it is fair to both private and commercial ratepayers. In Basildon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is seen as a much younger version of Moses coming down from Mount Sinai carrying two tablets of stone—the Local Government Bill to outlaw political propaganda on the rates, and this rate limitation order. They will be bitter tablets for local authorities that have abused and wasted ratepayers' money, but for my constituents those tablets will act as a positive elixir, giving much needed relief. I hope that the House will take those tablets tonight and vote for the order.

6.6 pm

Mr. Ernie Roberts (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Rates are supposed to meet local needs, and it is not for a Government to exercise arbitrary authority over local authorities about how they should set about meeting those needs.

The people of Hackney are the poorest, most deprived people in Britain. According to the Department of the Environment analysis, which is based on five counts, Hackney is one of the worst 10 boroughs in Britain. It has 15,000 people on housing lists, 8,000 empty houses and flats in need of repair, 5,000 one-parent families, the highest infant mortality rate and the greatest number of unemployed in London—25 per cent., or one in four of the adult population. It is the lowest paid area in London, it has the highest number of mentally ill people and schizophrenics, and a high percentage of old-age pensioners, many of whom suffer from a lack of heating in their homes. The Government are responsible for all those problems. What is more, money can solve them. That is my answer to Ministers, including the Prime Minister, who say that one cannot merely throw money at problems. Money needs to be thrown into Hackney and at those problems if they are to be solved.

The order will limit the lives, health and happiness of tens of thousands of Hackney people. The rate support grant seeks to even out social problems throughout Britain and to provide a fair share of the nation's public expenditure. However, the Government are cheating and

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depriving the people of Hackney. Their previous rate-capping exercise was so damaging that they had to return some £116 million to some boroughs. That was about equal to a 6·2 per cent. increase.

Hackney got only a 3·5 per cent. increase from the Government, which is less than the 5·2 per cent. inflation rate. That is how much of a blind eye the Tory Government turn to the people in Hackney, which is the most deprived borough. Hackney borough council says that this limitation order will force a cut in rate expenditure of some 11 per cent. That will mean cuts in services and jobs in the area.

The borough treasurer has estimated that the borough will need £150 million to take over the Greater London council's functions and run normal services. The order means that the council will get only £128 million. That means piling more poverty on top of that which already exists in the area. The Government are abolishing the GLC, but they are not giving Hackney borough council the money that it needs to carry out properly the jobs previously done by the GLC. The Government continue to throw more and more responsibilities on local authorities without providing the finance necessary to do the job.

Every local authority needs financial reserves and working balances. The Government have said that that is not necessary for Hackney borough council, yet in November 1985 they were advised that the council was £2·2 million overdrawn on the general rate fund. The borough treasurer estimates an overspend of £2·9 million in 1985-86, and that restoring the working balances will require an additional £5 million in the budget for 1986-87.

Hackney's poverty has meant that its borough council is going on to the money market to borrow some £50 million to pay private contractors to do building and the other necessary jobs. It is scandalous that the Government are forcing a local authority to try to deal in that way with urgent social problems such as poverty and deprivation. That will mean greater indebtedness for a borough that is already massively in debt.

For my part, I demand that this Tory Government stop oppressing the poor of Hackney. It is their responsibility to provide the money so that the poverty and deprivation can be overcome. I know that they are turning a deaf ear to what I am saying, but they will have to pay the consequences in the next general election when the people of this country and of Hackney will get rid of them and their rotten policies, which are causing this deprivation and poverty.

6.12 pm

Mr. K. Harvey Proctor (Billericay): I discovered on Friday that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) and I share the distinction of representing nuclear-free zones, for all the good that they do for our constituents. I always advise my constituents, when they travel down to my constituency, to catch a fast train and not a stopping one so that they do not have to stop at Brentwood, which is not a nuclear-free zone.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): That would be on the wrong line.

Mr. Proctor: The hon. Gentleman realises that my constituency is well served by railway stations and lines. There are two railway lines to my constituency. One goes to Billericay and the other goes to Basildon, through Laindon, which is part of my constituency.

The hon. Member for Copeland made it clear that, if a Labour Government were elected, they would abolish the Rates Act 1984 and make orders such as this unnecessary. In response to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), the hon. Gentleman claimed that he does not believe in curbing rates.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): He did not say that.

Mr. Proctor: He went down that road.

Mr. McKay: No. He did not say that.

Mr. Proctor: Tony Crosland made it quite clear that the party was over with regard to local authority spending. The views of the hon. Member for Copeland clearly mean that the party will begin again if a Labour Government are ever returned. That will represent a penal cost to ratepayers. The announcement comes just a few days after the Leader of the Opposition made it clear that the taxpayer would be clobbered for the Labour party's expenditure programme.

Why is it important that we deal with local authorities? Why have the Government had to come to the House with measures to deal with local authorities' expenditure bills? They spend rather a lot. Local authorities spent £39 billion in 1984-85, or 11 per cent., of gross domestic product. They employ 3 million, or 14 per cent., of the work force. The idea that Parliament can wash its hands, in a Pontius Pilate act, of what local authorities do is just not on.

The hon. Member for Copeland also said that it is not easy for local authorities. It is not easy for ratepayers, taxpayers, industries and entrepreneurs in my constituency to create job opportunities when Basildon district council is on their neck. Two thirds of my constituency falls within the Basildon district council area. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) represents the rest of the council's area.

The order would provide a maximum rate of 52·75p for Basildon in 1986-87. That compares with 50·33p in 1985-86—an increase of 4·8 per cent., which is just below the current rate of inflation. The maximum has been set because Basildon is a high-spending council. The authorities have been selected for a second year of rate limitation because they spend more than 20 per cent. of grant-related expenditure and are budgeting to spend more than 1 per cent. over target or have increased spending by more than 30 per cent. since 1981-82. Basildon was budgeting to spend more than 66·8 per cent. above GRE in 1985-86 and is 1·5 per cent. over target in 1985-86. It therefore falls well within the parameters laid down by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman shows great expertise in the record of Basildon council and why it has been rate-capped. Basildon has increased its expenditure by 48 per cent. since the new systems came into force in 1981. The adjacent Conservative-controlled council of Brentwood has increased its spending by 80 per cent. in the same period, according to the Government's figures. Why is Basildon rate-capped when Brentwood is not?

Mr. Proctor: Basildon, unlike Brentwood, is a very high spender. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) is talking in terms of percentages. If one looks at the rates paid compared with Basildon, one sees that Brentwood is lower. In absolute terms, Basildon is a high spender and these orders and rate capping were intended to trap and contain a certain number of high-spending local authorities. If the order is approved, as I hope that it will be, Basildon district council will be unable to fix a higher rate than that prescribed in the order 52·75p. However, it can fix a lower rate. There is nothing to stop it.

I first want to underscore the comments made by my hon. Friend the Minister when he opened the debate. He said that last year there was a great hysterical outcry from councils about the effect of rate capping. The leader of Basildon district council and the Labour group, Councillor Tinworth, sent a letter to each of my constituents in the Basildon district council area. He said that the objective of the Government was

"to force our council to cut back services to the tune of £1 million or more. That's a horrific cut, and it could be catastrophic."

Councillor Timworth went on to show a number of areas where he thought the council would have to cut or severely restrict services.

That was a self-fulfilling fear by the leader of the Labour group. The one act that the council performed as a result of looking at the budget again was to close the swimming pool in Billericay. The swimming pool was council-run and had been open for only three or four years and it was closed as a politically punitive act by Basildon district council because it thought that there was no political advantage in Billericay. The nine councillors in Billericay are Conservative, so the Labour group did not think it would take control of the seats in Billericay. Therefore, the council thought it could close the swimming pool with impunity and blame the Government. I shall look later at the "caring" attitude of Basildon district council in denying my constituents in Billericay the right to go to their swimming pool and to leave closed such a new capital asset with the standing charges continuing month after month and year after year. It is a diabolical party political act that has been perpetrated on my constituents.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) referred to a number of areas where the council has been excessive in its spending. He referred to information. The public relations department of Basildon district council seems to have been a major growth area in recent years. In 1983-84, the council spent £180,000 on it and employed nine members of staff. It is now proposing to spend £310,000 in 1986-87 and employ 12 members of staff. That is not the end of it. There are other areas where expenditure on information is to be found. For example, £88,850 is to be spent on the advisory services, welfare and legal advice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon referred to union communications and the amount of ratepayers' money spent on what is effectively a party political act. Because certain people do not have the resources to get up and campaign around the constituency, they sit at home, using ratepayers' money and union communications to project the Labour policy of the council.

Mr. Amess: I wonder whether my hon. Friend will agree that the so-called PR exercise that the council indulges in always has the same message. It says, "Vote Labour", it is critical of the Government and it disgracefully claims credit for things which it has not organised, funded or exercised any control over.

Mr. Proctor: The council is welcome to its view, but it should campaign at its own expense or use money that it has raised politically. The money should not come from the ratepayer because that is not right. The amount of money in the different budget headings on information comes to over £500,000 for 1986-87. That is a monstrous waste of my ratepayers' money.

Mr. Dobson: Does the hon. Gentleman not recognise that the Government spend a little money here and there on propaganda campaigns? For example, does he think that it is sound spending to advertise the youth training scheme? The Government are not presenting a balanced view of it in the television advertisement. He and his hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) talked about the oddity of the relationship between the Basildon district council and union communications. What does the hon. Gentleman think about the relationship between this Tory Government and Saatchi and Saatchi, which has received a substantial number of public contracts?

Mr. Proctor: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, when he is on the Front Bench, and his colleagues who speak on youth training matters, seem to support the youth training scheme. The hon. Gentleman has now nipped a row back to the Back Benches, has taken off his collective Front Bench responsibility and started to attack the youth training scheme. I would have thought that every hon. Member who wants to encourage training would want the widest possible spread of information on such matters. That is quite different from the type of Labour party propaganda that is coming through our letter boxes, appearing in newspapers and on leaflet after leaflet from the public relations office of the Basildon district council.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon also mentioned expenditure on computers. It is right for local authorities, Basildon district council included, to spend money on computers. In 1986-87, it proposes to spend about £700,000 on computers, compared with a figure in 1985-86 of only £65,000. That is correct. However, the staffing levels are stable. The council is not introducing computers to try to reduce the staffing levels; it is having computers as well as the staff. The Basildon district council spends £7·2 million on salaried staff and £3·5 million on manual staff. Staffing takes 25 per cent. of the total budget of the local authority expenditure. Those are sizeable sums and I have no doubt that savings could be made in some areas.

In more modest terminology, I cannot for the life of me understand why Basildon district council is running an EEC course for women which costs £21,700. I should be interested to know the attitude of the Equal Opportunities Commission to that expenditure. I am not reassured when I am told that half the expenditure — presumably, another £21,700—comes from the European Economic Commission. That just underlines the stupidity of such courses.

Basildon district council has closed and kept closed the Billericay swimming pool and said that it is saving £80,000 to £100,000 in a full year, but I cannot understand why at the same time it has announced a tree planting scheme which will cost £1 million over 10 years. I accept that trees should be planted, but we must take account of

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priorities. My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and I are fortunate in having constituencies that are well-endowed with trees. Basildon district council does not have the right priorities.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, when the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), who has recently resigned as Secretary of State for Defence, was the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister with responsibility for Merseyside, his major contribution was to plant a tree for every job lost on Merseyside?

Mr. Proctor: I am not aware of that action. I am sure that the trees will grow and be of value to the people who live on Merseyside.

Mr. Roberts: The hon. Gentleman has the jobs and the trees.

Mr. Proctor: We have some jobs and trees, although the unemployment figures in Billericay and Basildon are far too high. The good news from Basildon about the reduction in the unemployment rate is not enough. We want unemployment in Billericay and Basildon to decrease, and I believe that every hon. Member would say the same.

I am sorry to keep referring to my swimming pool in Billericay, but the reasons for the closure are curious. The Labour council says that it is all the fault of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench and that I should direct my criticisms towards them. If I thought for one moment that it was their fault, the lives of my right hon. and hon. Friends would be uncomfortable until my swimming pool was reopened, but I can acquit my colleagues of the blame.

The saving from closing the swimming pool is expected to be £80,000 to £100,000 in a full year. More than £3 million is currently available to benefit the ratepayers by a rates reduction and/or by reopening the swimming pool in Billericay. That amount includes £1,496,000, which is the revised estimate, showing that the net expenditure for 1985-86 is nearly £1·5 million less than the original net estimate of £13,662,000. There is, therefore, about £1·5 million of underspending.

In addition, there are two special funds. As part of the process of closing the accounts for the 1984-85 financial year, Basildon district council found it possible to establish special funds under schedule 13 of the Local Government Act 1972. Such funds have been invested and the balances as at 31 March 1986 are estimated at £545,000 for the general expenditure reserve account and £275,000 for the repairs and renewals fund, totalling £820,000.

In addition, the direct labour organisation has a fund. Surpluses have been paid into the fund. The accumulated surplus as at 31 March 1985 was £295,000. The estimate for March 1986 is as high as £325,000. That amount is available as well. There is also a special item because the council made an out-of-court settlement with a construction company because of defective works on council dwellings, and this adds a further £470,000.

In total, £3 million in the reserves is available for allocation. There is also additional rate support grant through the block grant mechanism, which has increased from £873,000 to £1,268,000, giving an extra £395,000. This makes a total of about £3·3 million.

The policy executive of Basildon district council meets tonight to discuss those figures. I do not believe that it is necessary for the council to maintain those high balances. In the total budget for 1986-87, there is already an item for more than £1,700,000, providing for inflation, and a further £350,000 for contingencies. Clearly, if the political malice of the Labour leaders of Basildon district council is put aside, there will be enough money, first, to reopen Billericay swimming pool next week — it would cost £80,000 to £100,000—and, secondly, to reduce the rate demand by at least 10p in the pound. This will galvanise entrepreneurs, industry and commerce in my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon into providing more job opportunities.

Like the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), I do not believe that the rating system is perfect. Unlike him, I believe that we should congratulate the Government on bringing forward a Green Paper which attempts to tackle the problem from which the Opposition are running away.

Mr. Allan Roberts: What will happen in the next election?

Mr. Proctor: The hon. Gentleman would be surprised at the number of votes that will be garnered on that issue during the next general election. We shall see in the next election who is right and who wins the argument.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Proctor: I have given way once to the hon. Member for trees. I am coming to my conclusion and I have been speaking for longer than I expected.

May I ask the Under-Secretary: is rate capping, in the way in which it is handled at the moment, rather a blunt instrument? What consideration has been given to the attitude of those people who believe that selectivity might be introduced by rate-capping various heads of expenditure or budget areas in a council's expenditure pattern?

I believe that reform of the rating system is long overdue. Under the present imperfect system rate capping is necessary to protect the ratepayers of Basildon, Billericay and Wickford whom I represent. I am delighted to be able to support the order.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: The hon Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) drew attention to the length of his speech. He was interrupted several times. I draw the House's attention to the fact that a considerable number of hon. Members wish to take part. If we can have reasonably brief speeches I will be able to accommodate them all.

6.40 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): As the Minister said at the beginning of the debate, it is not surprising that, compared with the identical debate a year ago, the steam, some of the heat and much of the passion has gone out of this subject. A year ago we were asked to pass an order about rate capping. It was the first time that the Rates Act 1984 had been used to fix the rates of local authorities. At that time two Opposition arguments were

put forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) and I put then the arguments that pertain equally today. They were arguments of principle and arguments of practice. In different ways all of us tried to show the probable outcome of what the Government were seeking to do. The arguments of principle remain the same and they are now stonger than ever.

In some cases rate capping has an apparent advantage and an appeal when it reduces rates and people directly benefit in their pockets. However, the disadvantages of the rate-capping system, its arbitrariness and the fundamental anomaly of the setting by Parliament of the budgets of local authorities, which by their nature should raise and spend money and decide on their priorities, are still evident.

I make no bones about the fact that, as last year, on behalf of my colleagues, I oppose rate capping. I oppose the principles of the Rates Act, in spite of the fact that rates in my constituency will be reduced as a result of the order. I oppose those principles not only in principle but in practice, because they are part of an increasingly muddled system of local government finance. There is no logic to the system of which rate capping forms a part.

While rates are to be held down in some borough and district councils — eight London boroughs and three other councils—the shires are paying the cost. We heard the screams a few weeks ago of ratepayers in the shire counties of England and Wales who were having to pay because of the manipulation of a system of local government finance, which annually allows the system to be adjusted to suit the needs and the wishes of central Government.

I suspect that the position next year will be more difficult. I would be grateful for a hint from the Minister about what shall be done. The criteria have so far being linked to targets, but targets have now gone. If the Minister proposes that rate capping should continue for a third year, a different system must be devised. I am intrigued to know what that system will be.

My greatest objection is that the Government are interfering with the decisions of local authorities. It comes as no surprise that the Government are doing so mainly in London in the year when we are only three months away from local elections, which will determine the political future of the 32 London boroughs for the next four years.

Rate capping must never be considered in isolation. The debate is the last in a series during the past weeks and months. The rate support grant orders, the debates about the ILEA precept, the precepts imposed by the joint police boards and by London Regional Transport and the levy which will come from the London Residuary Body, all add up to central Government's imposition of control mechanisms on local government expenditure.

The practice this year is different. First, last year there was hyped-up protestation from representatives of the Labour party whose councils were affected. This year all the councils affected are Labour-controlled. They said last year that it would be impossible to comply with rate-cap limits without cuts in jobs and services. That has not been the case. It is tragic that many Labour councillors' reaction to the Government-imposed rate limits was that phoney war, leading to delayed rate setting and tens of thousands of pounds, possibly hundreds of thousands of pounds, being lost from council budgets, which has reduced the money available to be spent this year.

It comes as no surprise that the national leaders of the Labour party — as always, after the event — have now been forced to say that the campaign and budget strategy adopted by those Labour authorities was misconceived and not in the interests of the people whom the councillors were elected to represent.

We have lived through that and this year we are addressing rate capping in the light of that experience. I hope that the Government will also learn, because it is not only Labour authorities that must take the responsibility for what happens in the months ahead.

The second difference from last year is that we are now living on the verge of the effects of the abolition of the Greater London council and, in Liverpool's case, the abolition of the metropolitan county of Merseyside. No one knows the real cost of the abolition of those authorities. The figures that the Government have added into the equation of the cost will not reflect the real costs. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) was right to highlight the fact that the funds of the voluntary sector will be the hardest hit. On other occasions in the House I have raised matters of urban aid and of law centres, which are not covered by the budget of the Department of the Environment. Many voluntary bodies do not know whether they will receive enough money to survive. They do not know whether they will receive any grant, because the grant source is no longer available. They may fold early because of uncertainty, or later because the money will not be there. To pretend that abolition has not cost money is wrong, because the truth will out and it will become apparent that it will cost much more than the £100 million predicted and that services will suffer accordingly.

The third difference is that last year we were discussing 13 authorities, nine in London and four outside. This year we are discussing 12, including the new authorities of Liverpool and Newcastle. Newcastle has negotiated an arrangement and is not covered by the order, so we are left with 11 authorities, eight in London and three outside. It is likely that, because of the Local Government Bill, this year's rates will be fixed by 1 April. The Minister knows that I do not oppose that duty.

We all recall the difficulties and the costs resulting from the late fixing of the rates last year. However, it will not be good enough to learn the cost of last year's late rate setting months after the elections in May. We need to know in good time—within a matter of days or at most weeks — of the courts' decisions in the Lambeth and Liverpool cases and what the costs will be for ratepayers in those boroughs in which the district auditor has said that there were substantial losses. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that, as soon as the court cases are decided—I appreciate that that may include an appeal—we shall quickly have an adjudication on the other losses, so that ratepayers can soon judge the results of what happened last year.

Having turned the screw once last year, the Government are trying to turn it a second time. The difference is that, however easy it might have been for councils to cope with the first turn of the screw, inevitably it will be more difficult to cope with problems adequately after a second turn. We must remember that with all the boroughs about which we are talking, except possibly the two out-of-London local authorities, although not Liverpool, we are talking about areas with substantial poverty, deprivation and hardship for many.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

Liverpool has been appallingly mismanaged in the past couple of years. It has had the worst kind of financial incompetence and mismanagement that any local authority could have had. Only now is the Labour leadership saying that publicly—as ever, harmfully late for the people of the city. The mismanagement goes on, but I hope that it will soon be brought to an end by the combination of a variety of financial pressures and by the results of the coming elections, which will pass judgment on what has happened in the past few years. That does not mean to say that Liverpool will be able to cope if the Government are not more generous. Rate capping and the use of balances in previous years mean that it will not be possible to set rates at the limit that has been imposed without cuts in services and increases in prices. I hope that the Minister will accept that that is not acceptable for the many people in the city who are already not getting the level of services that they want.

I presume that the Minister will confirm that so far this year the Labour-controlled Liverpool city council has done nothing about fixing a rate. Not one budget document has been circulating and there has been no official consultation or consideration, publicly or in committees, of the possible rate, with only a month to go. It appears as if the councillors wish to behave like ostriches — perhaps believing that in a week or two they will not be responsible for setting the new rate. That may be one result of the court case.

While internal party fighting is going on, with certain people concentrating more on putting their case to Walworth road tomorrow, schools are running out of basic necessities, lifts in high-rise blocks are not working because the council has not paid the bills, and children's homes do not have sheets on the beds and cannot buy new ones because the council is not honouring its financial commitments. All the time, the deputy leader of the council has a chauffeur-driven car and £300,000 has been spent on propaganda—a real loss of £750,000 to the ratepayer. The arts for example, the Liverpool philharmonic orchestra—are in jeopardy, the employees of agencies at the moment looked after by the county council are at risk. I hope that sanity will come, and that when it does, the Government will respond with some compassion, because the people of Liverpool are at present the victims.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts) referred to his borough and constituency, and the conditions there are desperate. There have been no special grants for housing, much of which is appalling and needs a great deal of work. The borough needs housing subsidy and money for social services, and with very high levels of need, such as in single-parent families, there are enormous pressures on social services and the like. I hope that the Government do not expect Hackney to borrow this year to spend what it could not spend last year. I said last year that I did not believe that Hackney could cope adequately with the imposed rate limit. It has been trying, but this year it will be less able to cope with the Government's new limits.

The two boroughs about which I know most are both south of the river—Southwark and Lambeth. There is no doubt that Lambeth teaches us one lesson above all. That is that the people of Lambeth, although they have shown no great affection for the Government and their policies, nevertheless are clearly of the view that the Labour authority has wasted an enormous amount of money.

The *South London Press* shows that the £54,000 spent on consulting ratepayers in the campaign of the past few weeks has produced empty halls with hardly a handful of members of the public appearing. However it continues:

"Cllr. Knight says the absence of angry ratepayers confirms their support for the no cuts policy."

The probability is that the absence of ratepayers from the meetings, which has caused the meetings to be aborted as a campaigning plank, shows that the ratepayers have no confidence in the campaigning tactics or policies of Councillor Knight and his friends.

Mr. John Fraser: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the real test of the popularity of the council rests not with the *South London Press* but with the ballot box. At the by-elections there has been overwhelming support for the Labour party.

Mr. Hughes: I recall a by-election in the Vauxhall constituency last year that had the largest electoral turnout in a by-election in Lambeth borough since the last general election. I also recollect that my friend and colleague Mr. Mike Tuffrey was elected, taking the seat from the Labour party.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The simple fact is that, out of five or six by-elections at borough level, the Labour party increased its share of the vote and gained a vote of around 50 per cent., which the Liberal party did not. He should recognise that he is playing a cheap trick.

Mr. Hughes: I am willing to stand by the judgment of the electorate in May, and I confidently predict that my party will gain more seats in Lambeth from its present position than the Labour party will from its position. We already have some seats, so we are not starting from nil.

My borough of Southwark has an enormous problem over and above the problems of other boroughs. We have the largest amount of ex-GLC housing stock, which is in need of massive amounts of money being spent on renovation and repairs. The limit that it has been allowed this year does not reflect even pay and price increases over the past year.

Mr. Straw: Is the hon. Member in favour of rate capping?

Mr. Hughes: If the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) had been here at the beginning of my speech, he would know that, not only am I not in favour of rate capping, but, like him, I am not even in favour of it although it benefits us personally by putting down the rates that we have to pay on our homes in Lambeth and Southwark.

Southwark's reserves have been all but spent. If the Government's rate-capping limits are to be abided by, and expenditure is held down to last year's level in cash terms, there will be draconian effects on the people at the bottom end of the social scale, who are desperately in need of more services. Through their elected representatives they should be allowed to decide what level of services should be provided. The Department of the Environment has to bear the consequences of the fact that people will have worse housing, social services and other public services next year because of the Government's policies than they would have done if more money had been raised.

There is one way in which Southwark could have increased its income, but one cannot suddenly increase the collection of rate arrears, appalling though they are, in a matter of months. A relaxation to take account of that would have been welcome.

There is no adequate compensation for the abolition of the GLC. We shall find that, even with the tightest budgetary control—the budget may not be in the hands of the Labour party after May — there will be great difficulty in doing anything like retain the key essential services, let alone the non-statutory ones, that I hope that the Minister, when she was in local government, would have fought to defend.

If we had gone for re-determination a little earlier in Southwark, we might have done a little better. I have no doubt that our local authority could have managed the books much better as well. It does not change the principle of the debate, however, that rate capping, having been wrong in logic from the beginning, is more harmful in practice as time goes on. It is more harmful in the second year than it was in the first. After this year I hope that Ministers will be persuaded, even if they were not last year, that this should be the final year in which the Government seek to use the powers they gave themselves in the rates legislation and will realise that it is folly to take away from local representatives the power to decide the level of services that their people want and to which they are entitled.

6.59 pm

Mr. Simon Coombs (Swindon): I apologise to the House for the fact that I was unable to hear the opening speeches. I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene in the debate because this issue affects my constituents significantly.

This time last year in the equivalent debate my lips were sealed in that I was one Bench nearer the front than I am now. One of the advantages of having moved backwards geographically is being able to move forward to take part in this debate.

The embarrassment to which I have to admit is occasioned by the fact that the borough council, two thirds of whose area I represent, is even in the list of rate-limited authorities. Swindon is not an area of inner-city deprivation, as are some of the other listed authorities. Indeed, I am grateful to the local government information unit for its production of facts and figures which show that many of the authorities under discussion today have those problems.

Why then should Thamesdown be listed among those authorities affected? I do not wish to give the impression to the House that unemployment in Swindon is any less a problem for those affected by it than it is in other parts of the country. If a person is unemployed, he is unemployed. If he has bad housing conditions, he has bad housing conditions, and naturally we all wish to see something done about it. The authority, part of which I represent, and similarly Basildon, cannot be compared in any reasonable way with those other affected authorities in the list, so why Thamesdown? Why is Thamesdown the highest rated authority in the country? To answer that question, it is necessary to go back quite a long time and I shall do so.

Swindon borough council, as it was before reorganisation 12 years ago, was directed by a town clerk, David Murray John, who had the foresight to recognise that a town based upon a single industry, the railways, could not for ever survive in that form and that if the inevitable decline in the railway industry, which he foresaw as long ago as 1950, was to be coped with by the local community, it would be necessary to take major steps to bring in alternatives for job creation.

Thus it was that Swindon borough council, without the help of Government money, undertook the role of a development agency. A number of generations of new industry have been brought to the town—in the earliest period, Pressed Steel Fisher, now an Austin Rover body pressing plant, then at a later stage Plessey and Garrards, producing well over 10,000 jobs.

Gradually the industrial nature of the town changed. Thus in recent years Swindon has developed a reputation as a high-tech town. The M4 is known as the silicon valley, the corridor of high tech which stretches from London to south Wales, and Swindon has been a part of that. The new companies have come in—National Semi conductor, Intel, Logica and so on—at the same time as the head offices of companies moving out of London.

It is worth reflecting why so many companies have moved their head offices from London to Swindon. The reason is very simple. They were enabled many years ago to move to an area where rates were much lower—but not so now. Burmah Oil, Anchor Food, Hambro Life—now Allied Dunbar—and other major companies have moved into the borough, which is now called Thamesdown. They were grateful at the time to do so, but now they begin to question the wisdom of what they have done.

The era of Swindon as a development agency can now be put in the past. Many hon. Members will be aware that firms are now seriously considering moving to Swindon even though there is no Government assistance for them to do so. Many large companies will consider moving to an assisted area in south Wales or in the north-east because they know that they will get substantial help from Government to do so. However, they also look at Swindon because it is an attractive area in terms of its geographical location and excellent communications and because there is a wide variety of private sector housing available in and round the town. They look at it and say, "Yes, Swindon is an attractive place to consider moving to."

I contend that the time has now gone when Thamesdown borough council could justify the enormous levels of expenditure on development. No longer is it necessary for Thamesdown borough council to think of itself as a development agency without benefit of Government help. The time has come when the momentum for change and growth is self-induced. There is, therefore, no reason for Thamesdown to continue such high expenditure. There are now so many jobs in new companies that public expenditure at the level which brought Thamesdown within the scope of this order is no longer necessary.

Mr. Dobson: Are there not now more people unemployed in Swindon, when the hon. Gentleman says the spending should stop, than there were when the spending was commenced?

Mr. Coombs: The hon. Gentleman has a point, but he is wrong. I am saying not that the expenditure should cease, but that it should come from a different quarter. I am suggesting that there is now such a momentum of private enterprise capital coming into the town as to make

[Mr. Coombs]

it unnecessary for Thamesdown borough council to continue with its high spending policies. I find it embarrassing to have to try to explain to other hon. Members why it should be necessary, given that Swindon is a rapidly expanding area with private enterprise companies queuing up to come to the town, for the local authority to go on hammering the ratepayers as it does.

Mr. Straw: If I may say so, the hon. Gentleman is making a rather more thoughtful speech than some that we have heard from the Government Benches. But why is he criticising Thamesdown so much for increasing its expenditure when it has increased by only 104 per cent. since 1979 while central Government spending has risen by 125 per cent.? On any basis Thamesdown has not been a high spender.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's helpful and thoughtful intervention. I would not for a moment want to justify high central Government expenditure, any more than I can possibly justify high local government expenditure. My view is that public expenditure has increased, is increasing and ought generally to be reduced. I hope that I have established that there is a momentum in Swindon that should be allowed to continue without further intervention.

I wish to examine a few other aspects of the activities of the local council. The council regards other areas of expenditure under only one heading: is it desirable? Almost invariably the majority decision of the council is yes. If it moves, it is worth spending money on it; if it does not move, it is still worth spending money on it. At a time of high financial stringency it simply will not wash to spend money upon anything. The ratepayers are not very happy about it.

It is unfortunate that the council has approved the expenditure at £15 million on a major new leisure centre, but has told those who want to improve their homes by means of non-mandatory grants that there is no money in the kitty. That is the wrong order of priorities. I should dearly love the council to change its policy. There must surely be room for manoeuvre within a budget of about £15 million. However, Thamesdown district council's propaganda might lead one to think that there is no room for manoeuvre.

Before the borough was rate limited last year it mounted a propaganda campaign of considerable proportions. There is another Bill before the House that deals with political propaganda campaigns. However, this particular propaganda campaign was accompanied by a point blank refusal to discuss with central Government whether Thamesdown was properly rate-limited. Time and again I asked the controlling Labour group to talk to the Government about it, but it refused to do so. Time and again my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment expressed his willingness to meet the local authority, but it refused to do so. There was a deafening silence about negotiations for an increase in the level of expenditure. A propaganda campaign was waged instead. Unremitting hostility was shown not only towards the Government but even towards the potential recipients of money that it was claimed would no longer be available. Voluntary bodies were told that there could be no guarantee that funds would continue to be made available after the local authority had been rate-capped.

I have received many letters from voluntary bodies in which they said that this could not be right, that surely the Government were not saying that their activities must be brought to a halt. The Government are saying nothing of the kind. They are merely saying that the borough's overall level of expenditure should be restrained. However, the borough chose to put fear into the hearts of those who were trying their best, on a voluntary basis, to do a good job in very difficult circumstances. The borough was rate-limited, but not one voluntary body suffered in the least.

It is interesting that this year there has been no propaganda campaign by the local authority. Its bluff was called and its cover was blown. Its empty threats of disaster were shown to be nonsense. We have heard no such threats this year. Indeed, in the certain knowledge that the House will approve the order, the borough has announced that a bonanza of new money will be made available to the voluntary bodies. I welcome that announcement because they will be worthy recipients of this money.

Is it not curious, however that a double-edged sword should be used by this borough? It is frightening people, but at the same time it is giving them more money. It is threatening them with no future but at the same time it is pouring money into their pockets, which will help to ensure their future. And the threats continue. I was present last Friday at the opening of a new bus service for the disabled. It is to be funded by urban aid money, which I welcome. Every local authority knows when it enters into an urban aid project that central Government money is not available on an open-ended basis. Therefore it is quite wrong, cruel and hypocritical for the borough to tell those people that it has no idea where the money will come from when the central Government grant ends. That should be rammed down the throats of those who are prepared to act in so intolerable and cruel a way.

What will be the effect of rate limitation upon the ratepayers of Thamesdown? A rate of 54·68p in the pound means that they will enjoy a cut of about 4·5 per cent. in the borough rate. That has to be set against the mammoth rise of 26 per cent. that is to be imposed by the county council. At a time of financial stringency, the Lib-Lab alliance in Wiltshire has gone ahead with major new spending plans. There is no shortage of money—

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Coombs: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish my sentence. We are told that there is no shortage of money, but a 26 per cent. rate increase has been imposed by the county council. This is said to be the right way to go about things. At a time of financial stringency there is to be additional expenditure of £2 million.

Mr. Roberts: Does the rate increase have nothing to do with the reduction in the county council's rate support grant?

Mr. Coombs: I am amazed that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) can be so naive. Of course it has. That is why I said that this is happening at a time of financial stringency. One would have expected a rational and sensible county council to control the level of expenditure, not to go in for excessive new expenditure.

—[Interruption.] The hon. Gentleman might listen to the answer when he has asked a question. He might even learn something, although I doubt it. I am already receiving letters of complaint from industry. It recognises the effect that this agglomerated rates increase will have, and it is only a matter of time before domestic ratepayers join in the chorus of complaint.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Will the hon. Gentleman take into account the fact that his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer admitted in an answer to me that the effect of rates on the total costs of United Kingdom commercial and industrial companies is less than 1 per cent.?

Mr. Coombs: I am very happy to do so. However, a rates bill of nearly £1 million a year, although it may be peanuts to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), represents a considerable burden for large companies in my constituency. The hon. Gentleman smiles, but he does not have to pay those bills. Those who do are extremely unhappy about it. A 26 per cent. rates increase that may be reduced to a 22 per cent. rates increase will be seriously regarded. He should not smile or make light of it for one moment.

Mr. Holland: As he is so fluent and articulate, will the hon. Gentleman comment on the effect of corporation tax on companies? He has a point: smaller firms generally pay higher taxes. However, it is not simply a question of rates, which they pay proportionately; it is also a question of corporation tax. Because of tax rebates, big business pays next to no corporation tax. The fiscal crisis comes from that, not from the imposition of rates on small firms.

Mr. Coombs: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has made a fair point. I am delighted to be a supporter of a Government who are progressively reducing the level of corporation tax. I hope that that process will continue throughout the lifetime of this Parliament.

I regret that rate limitation is needed. I wish that these councils recognised the need for self-control. It is sad that central Government should have to impose control upon them, sometimes arbitrarily.

It seems unlikely that any such self-control will be manifested by any of the authorities we are discussing. The extreme Left is running things in most, if not all, of those authorities. Ordinary people in Swindon say to me, "If you think that Liverpool is bad, wait until you see what will happen to the Labour party in Swindon in the next few years." I appeal to the Government not to be deflected from their course. If we want to see the Hattons, the Knights and the Grants rampant, the way to go about it is to vote against this order. That is a terrifying thought, not only to hon. Members on the Government side but to most Opposition Members who are as frightened of their friends as we are. I hope that the House will support and confirm this order.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Mr. Speaker earlier made an appeal for brief speeches. I hope that that appeal will not be ignored.

7.21 pm

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): I am the first speaker in this debate representing a metropolitan district outside London that has been rate-capped as a result of this order. For the first time, the Liverpool metropolitan district has been selected in this order for rate capping.

Everybody is conversant with the social problems that cause anxiety in Liverpool. Deprivation is well known, and umpteen social surveys over the year have registered the fact that Liverpool is one of the most deprived cities, not only in Britain but in Europe.

Even the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) recognised that when he visited the city in 1981. When he addressed the Conservative party conference that year, he was forced to the conclusion that problems such as those that exist in inner-city Liverpool could be addressed only by large increases in public expenditure. Even the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), now no longer on the Front Bench, and his hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow), when they visited Liverpool in June 1984, made it quite clear that they could confirm that housing conditions there were among the worst that they had seen anywhere.

However, Liverpool is to be rate-capped. Rate capping for Liverpool is inequitable and anomalous. The decision to rate-cap Liverpool is based on the decision of the city council on 14 June 1985 to raise its expenditure level to £265 million. That was the so-called illegal budget. As everybody knows, and quite irrespective of the political arguments that have flowed over this problem in Liverpool, on 29 November 1985, the budget was levelled at £222 million. This was done by capitalising the maintenance and repair account, and by the use of special funds. If Liverpool had set its expenditure level of £222 million in June 1985, it would not have been rate-capped. I ask the Minister to confirm that. It is being rate-capped on a quite artificial figure.

To rate-cap Liverpool is totally unreasonable. For the next financial year, Liverpool's expenditure has been determined at £274·6 million. That is only 5·1 per cent. above the grant-related expenditure level decided by the Government. It is the lowest figure above GRE of any of the authorities mentioned in this order. The next lowest is Islington which is 12·5 per cent. above its GRE and a number of authorities that appear in this order are 59 per cent. above their GRE. I say again that it is quite unreasonable to rate-cap Liverpool when it is only 5·1 per cent. above GRE.

When the Minister is replying, perhaps she will address herself to the comments of the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford. On 25 July 1985, he said:

> "For authorities not previously selected, I am proposing the same criteria as I used this year: I am selecting authorities whose budgets this year are more than 20 per cent. above grant-related expenditure and more than 4 per cent. above target." —[*Official Report*, 25 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 1316.]

As I have said, Liverpool is only 5·1 per cent. above its GRE. I want to look at the implications for Liverpool of the abolition out of political vindictiveness of Merseyside county council. Taking into account the appropriate share of this year's county precept, the rate limits for the new joint boards allow a precept increase of over 50 per cent, but the rate limit covering the services of Merseyside county council that are transferred to Liverpool, is to be a mere 7 per cent. What is sauce for the goose should surely be sauce for the gander, but then, of course, the Government do not like Liverpool. The expenditure of the

[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]

joint board is much in excess of the GRE, far more than in the case of the city of Liverpool. That is another example of inequitable treatment.

The Government are fond of saying that they want to keep the rates down. One might feel that they had an argument if, after all these exercises that we have gone through, the rates were being kept down. But in Liverpool the rate limit, which has been set at 232·09p in the pound, is an 18 per cent. increase next year for the ratepayers of the city, and indeed for the business people that hon. Members on the Government side seem to be so worried about. It means an 18 per cent. increase even to reach the limit decided by the Government. *[Interruption.]* The ratepayers in Liverpool would hardly think it generous, but they are beginning to understand why we have this problem. That reason was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) who is the shadow spokesman on these matters. He pointed to the reduction in rate support grant from 61 per cent. of revenue to 47 per cent. of revenue this year. That is the real reason why we are having rate increases.

Liverpool city council will be allowed to spend £274·6 million next year, but that will not meet the needs of the people of Liverpool. That does not take into account the expenditure that will be necessary to sustain the services which the Merseyside county council has provided over the past 10 or more years. The city's capital programme has been determined provisionally, and it allows for £24 million for county services with an extra £2 million for grants to arts bodies, to voluntary organisations and to property such as the Croxteth hall and country park. These sums will be inadequate even to deal with the statutory obligations that are to be transferred to Liverpool city council as a result of the political vindictiveness that has led to the abolition of the Merseyside county council.

The Tories who send Members to this place to represent Merseyside districts, which will feel the pinch when services are lost with the abolition of the Merseyside county council, should ask themselves why. It is no use arguing that the Liverpool city council should become responsible for assisting the philharmonic hall, the philharmonic orchestra, Liverpool ice rink, Croxteth hall, the Liverpool playhouse, the Empire theatre and Liverpool airport and provide funds to assist umpteen voluntary organisations, and argue at the same time that the Government's legislation makes any extra resources available to those who live in the great city of Liverpool.

Transitional arrangements for voluntary organisations allow for central Government funding of £375,000. However, if Liverpool is to pick up that sum for that purpose, it will have to find an additional £455,000. Voluntary organisations are hammering on the door of the city council, and quite rightly because they often supplement Merseyside's social services. They do marvellous work for those who live in the city. However, they cannot expect the council to be able to provide the funds that have been removed from the city as a result of the Government's diktat.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned some of the services that Liverpool runs, including an ice rink. Why does he expect ratepayers and taxpayers in all the other counties, shires and districts of Britain to finance Liverpool's ice rink? Is it not about time that Liverpool started to contribute to our economy instead of drawing away from it?

Mr. Wareing: The Merseyside county council, whether under Tory rule or Labour rule, has always provided funds for the Liverpool ice rink. I shall explain why ratepayers and taxpayers in other areas should make a contribution. The hon. Gentleman may even go to church and he might even regard himself as a Christian. He may have heard the adage "Am I my brother's keeper?" The closure of the ice rink would do nothing to deter a rising level of youth delinquency that arises from unemployment in the area. Scores of young people benefit from the ice rink and its closure would have considerable social implications in areas of desperately high unemployment on Merseyside. The consequences would be even more unfortunate than the closing of the philharmonic hall.

Mr. Fallon *rose*——

Mr. Wareing: I do not want to enter into a dialogue with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Fallon: I understand that the closure of the ice rink might have the consequences that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting. What I do not understand is why Darlington ratepayers and taxpayers should help finance Liverpool's ice rink. What is Liverpool doing for Darlington?

Mr. Wareing: Those of us who believe in the redistribution of income and progressive taxation understand that the rich and richer than average will by those means help to provide for those who are weaker and poorer. I am sure that there are those in Darlington who are being subsidised by the tax policy of previous Government. The hon. Gentleman is advancing an absurd argument.

Liverpool city council is being asked to provide moneys for services which have been transferred to it as a result of the abolition of Merseyside county council. It even has to face debt charges on museums and art galleries, which will go to an unelected quango in a similar way to the art galleries and museums of metropolitan London. It is wrong that the city council should have to pick up that bill.

Sir Ian Percival (Stockport): The hon. Gentleman knows that I have many constituents who have businesses in Liverpool and who are therefore affected by Liverpool's rate although they do not have a vote in the area and do not have any say in its rating policy. He is aware that they do not have a business vote in Liverpool.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman want them to have two votes? Is his policy one person, two votes?

Sir Ian Percival: The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) is missing the point. He should know that I am not to be put off by such silly talk. The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) knows what I am talking about. Many of my constituents pay rates on business premises in Liverpool and they do not have a vote in the areas in which their businesses are situated. He is arguing that the rate-capped sum which has been set for Liverpool will lead to a rate increase of 18 per cent. and that that will not be a sufficient increase. What does he think the increase would be instead of 18 per cent. if a limit had not been imposed?

Mr. Wareing: The answer to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's question is that the rate support grant should never have been slashed in the first place. I have a feeling that his constituents use the Liverpool philharmonic hall and the playhouse and Empire theatre to a disproportionate extent. They are the people who use the facilities that are now to be paid for almost entirely by the Liverpool ratepayers. Those who live in Southport and the Wirral benefit disproportionately from certain services that are provided in Liverpool, and they are now to be brought to an end as a result of the Government's policy.

The determination of target expenditure is based upon the 1981-82 budget, and there have been many significant changes beyond the council's control since then. For example, the council has no control over its income. It has suffered losses in rent income because of the demolition of houses and the evacuation of families.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is my hon. Friend aware that the effect of rate capping on Liverpool will be a shortfall of about £37 million and a loss of 800 jobs in an area where unemployment stands at 22 per cent.? It will lead to an abandonment of the housing scheme which was inherited from the previous Liberal administration, in the implementation of which not one brick was laid for the building of a council house.

Mr. Wareing: I recall that it was the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) who, as chairman of the Liberal-controlled housing committee in Liverpool for so many years, stopped council house building and boarded up 5,000 houses, which caused a loss of revenue to the city.

If the measure is passed, Liverpool city council will have seriously to review its housing programme. That programme provides homes for some of the 20,000 people with unmet housing needs in Liverpool and jobs for building workers in the city.

The subsidy arrangements for 1983-84 also meant that the loss of subsidy effectively offset any reductions in marginal expenditure. Therefore, the whole of the lost rent income served to increase net expenditure.

It must be remembered that Liverpool has traditionally been a regional provider of residential services through its social services department. Because of the fall in demand from outlying areas and other parts of the north-west for accommodation for children and young people, other local authorities reducing their expenditure do so at Liverpool's expense. That affects Liverpool's income.

The economic situation in Liverpool, largely caused by the Government's unholy monetarist policies, has led to an increase in free school meals. More and more families impoverished by the Government's economic policies are now dependent upon free school meals. That is additional expenditure for the Liverpool city council.

Governments over the past 10 years have determined that new law courts should be built in the city of Liverpool. Now that the new buildings are in use, St. George's hall, which was the traditional site of the Crown courts in the city, is now a financial burden on the city as it lacks Government assistance. St. George's hall is now closed, as the philharmonic hall and many other buildings may well be closed in the near future as a result of Government policy.

The loss of revenue to the city of Liverpool through the closure of St. George's hall in 1984-85 was £325,000. The compensating savings were less than £200,000. That meant a net loss for the city of Liverpool of more than £120,000.

There has been a reduction in the income from Manpower Services Commission agency courses at colleges of further education. That has also affected Liverpool city council's income. There have also been expenditure increases which were beyond Liverpool council's control.

For example, Liverpool city council is now responsible for providing 10 per cent. of the share of housing benefits. Incidentally, I noticed that the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), who is no longer in the Chamber, actually thinks that people who are on housing benefits ipso facto do not pay taxes. Of course they do, although the hon. Gentleman probably has not the slightest notion of that. He probably owns more than one house and I am sure he has no need of housing benefit.

It has been necessary in Liverpool to increase the number of maintenance grants and grants for clothing and footwear to pupils as a result of the deprivation caused by the Government's policies. Additional expenditure will have to be found, which again is beyond the city council's control, for the maintenance of the magistrates courts.

Since 1981, despite all these problems and the extra expenditure needed, the rate support grant lost to Liverpool has been £245 million. When the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) worries about his ratepayers, he should direct his concern at his Government's Front Bench. The Government are responsible for the £245 million which the city of Liverpool has lost since 1981. That sum is the equivalent of a rate rise of about 130p in the pound.

The Government are apparently unwilling to meet the needs of the people of Liverpool. The Government have made promise after promise and exhortation after exhortation to the Liverpool city council but they have broken their promises.

The Government are fond of accusing the Liverpool city council of being irresponsible, but I remind them of a meeting that I attended—the first meeting between the former Secretary of State for the Environment, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford and the Liverpool city councillors. The right hon. Gentleman said that he would use his best endeavours to help the housing situation in Liverpool. I also read the right hon. Gentleman's letter of 29 June 1984 to the leader of the Liverpool city council, Councillor John Hamilton, in which he made a similar reference. However, when the housing investment programme was settled for 1985-86, it was settled at £31·5 million, which was £6·5 million less than before the former Secretary of State made his promise in 1984-85.

I ask the Government to move away from their studied indifference to the needs of the people of Liverpool. If they cannot, at this late hour, withdraw the statutory instrument or table an interim order, then, for goodness' sake, they should get together with the elected representatives of the city of Liverpool — while there still are elected representatives of the city of Liverpool—and work out a sensible housing investment programme. The Government should also look at the urban programme.

I have no great hope that the Government will do that, as they have been spending their time avoiding meetings. I laughed a little wrily when I heard the hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) talking about the Secretary of

[Mr. Wareing]

State offering to go to Swindon to talk to the Swindon councillors. That may be marvellous, but the Liverpool city councillors have been trying to get the Secretary of State's officials to come together to discuss the issue.

When the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment replies to the debate, I hope that she will answer some of the questions that have been asked in connection with the city of Liverpool. I hope that the answers will be motivated by something more than political vindictiveness which I believe has been meted out deliberately to Liverpool city council as a lesson to the rest of the country.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) commenced his speech, I appealed for brevity. I am sorry to have to repeat that appeal at the end of his speech.

7.48 pm

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I know that my constituents and ratepayers will welcome the order and will be particularly pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government did not accede to the appeal from the leadership of Southwark council to increase the rate limitation.

The order marks a further step along the line to control the wanton and wasteful expenditure of Southwark council and the general mismanagement of so many of its services.

Southwark council receives payment of rates from some 30 per cent. of its residents. The remaining 70 per cent. are on some form of rate rebate. That means that they are not in any sense committed to the expenditure considerations of that council. Indeed, two thirds of the total rate bill is met by commercial, industrial and other rates and not by the domestic ratepayer.

There is something of a note of hypocrisy in Opposition suggestions that local government is autonomous, responsible and accountable. In my borough there is no link between those who pay the bills and those who spend the money. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) brought that point out when he talked of the people who pay rates but who do not have an opportunity to say how they are spent.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham) *rose*——

Mr. Bowden: I give way to my constituent.

Ms. Harman: Is it not a condemnation of the Government's policy that the huge increase in unemployment in Southwark has meant a huge increase in the number of people who cannot pay their rates? Should not the hon. Gentleman feel ashamed of that, rather than add insult to injury by denying such people the right to vote while casting them into unemployment?

Mr. Bowden: The hon. Lady makes a fair point, but where businesses have to pay high rates they move out. In one of the main streets of my constituency the number of "For Sale" boards and small businesses closing show that they are being driven out by high rates.

Mr. Allan Roberts: That is not true.

Mr. Bowden: It is true. I believe that I am better informed than the hon. Member.

Mr. Roberts: Does the hon. Gentleman admit that high interest rates are a greater burden on small businesses than high rates?

Mr. Bowden: They should not be compared. They are two separate burdens. One can be controlled by the local authority and this measure attempts to control it.

It is worth looking at the history of rate capping. It has been a great benefit to those of my constituents who pay rates. They have seen their rate bill decrease by about 25 per cent. over the past year—the borough rate by 11 per cent. and the GLC and ILEA precept by a further 14 per cent. That has been a great benefit to them and they welcome this further step in that direction.

It is instructive to compare what happens in a borough such as Southwark, which has a great deal of inner-city deprivation but also one or two desirable residential parts, with a borough such as Wandsworth which is not so far away. Wandsworth has a demography similar to that of Southwark. There is a tale of two boroughs which bears careful examination.

Both boroughs started from a similar base when they were both Labour-controlled in 1977. Southwark had a rate of 66p and Wandsworth a rate of 68p. Wandsworth was more highly rated than Southwark in 1977. The story began to change when a Conservative administration was elected in Wandsworth. I see that the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) has moved to the Front Bench. Ambition knows no end.

There has been an instructive development over the careful years of good housekeeping by a Conservative administration in Wandsworth. The two boroughs started at roughly the same level but in 1984-85 Southwark's rate was 260p in the pound and Wandworth's was 137p in the pound. Wandsworth started higher but its rates are now only just over half Southwark's. The administrations of Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark should be carefully compared to see what can be done in similar areas.

We can also compare the management of financial affairs. Wandsworth has rent arrears. The latest figure that I have heard quoted was about £3 million. Southwark's rate arrears amount to £23 million. There is some disgraceful mismanagement if rent arrears at that level are allowed to accrue.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a high proportion of the rent arrears in boroughs such as Southwark and Lambeth are due to the late payment of housing benefit by the DHSS? Is he aware of what those delays are? The boroughs have protested time and time again that they could not possibly take over those payments from the DHSS. That is one reason for the delay.

Mr. Bowden: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a good point, but I do not see that life is so different in Southwark and Lambeth, which are only three or four miles away from Wandsworth.

Mr. Holland: It is because DHSS offices in areas of especially high unemployment are under heavy pressure. The Secretary of State is laughing, but at least junior Ministers take the matter seriously.

Mr. Bowden: The hon. Gentleman may have a point but it does not explain the difference between £3 million and £23 million. A difference of that order cannot be the result of the DHSS offices' slowness.

We should also compare the way in which properties are managed. A loss of income results from empty

properties. I believe the current figure in Southwark is about £4,000, whereas in Wandsworth it is infinitely less, at £1,000. Better management and organisation are required to ensure that available resources are properly used.

The difference in expenditure is reflected when it is put on a per capita basis. The cost of removing refuse in Southwark by its direct labour force is about £21·16 per head. That should be compared with Wandsworth where it is about £8·71 per head—about one third of the cost. There is more satisfaction about refuse collections in Wandsworth than there is in Southwark.

The same applies to expenditure on highways. In Southwark £36·09 per head is spent, whereas in Wandsworth it is £15 per head. There is something drastically wrong when there is such a difference in the figures. That has come about since 1978. Southwark has raced ahead and Wandsworth has reined in its expenditure.

That suggests that there is an opportunity for improvement. Services can be improved and costs cut at the same time. There is not necessarily a contradiction between those two principles. Those responsible for raising the rates and spending the money should address themselves to how that can best be done to achieve cost-effective services and value for money.

The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) quoted a law lecturer at Southampton university. I always listen with great interest when a law lecturer is quoted. was struck by the words quoted:

"Rate capping is a short-term expedient".

That is a fair judgment. It is an effective expedient, but only in the short term. In the long term, we must find a way to make local government more accountable, more responsive to those who pay for the services which they have a duty to provide and more cost conscious, and we must ensure that they obtain value for money.

Although rate capping is not the perfect answer, it is a workable expedient for the ratepayers of my constituency and other parts of London which are subject to the order. I welcome the order, an improvement in the rating system and the reforms adumbrated in the Green Paper. I give the order my warm support.

7.58 pm

Mr. Allan Roberts (Bootle): Thank you for calling me at such an early stage in the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been here almost throughout the debate. I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Boden). I wish to say something about what the hon. Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) said. They were in favour of rate capping. I listened carefully and listed the reasons that they gave, which were that Basildon council had run a welfare rights campaign and is good at publicity. The Government did not mind councils spending money on publicity, until they got good at it, because they have always spent money on publicity. It has increased the number of jobs in the area, it has campaigned against the two Tory MPs, it wins elections, it wants the best possible boundaries to enable Labour to win seats in the future, it will be re-elected, and it has closed the swimming pool. That is not a saving, so it must be a cut. It has planted a lot of trees and prudently has a large amount of reserves. That seems to be the basis of the justification for rate-capping Basildon. I wish to deal with all the other rate-capped authorities, the order and the way it operates.

We have heard that Liverpool has been rate-capped. Last year, Liverpool would not put the rates up and that put it into an illegal situation. The Government urged Liverpool to put the rates up, Stonefrost urged Liverpool to put the rates up, as did the Minister who will reply to the debate. Now the Government are forcing Liverpool to cut jobs and services or attain a legal budget. The Government will not allow Liverpool to put the rates up more than a certain amount because Liverpool is being rate-capped. How did rate capping come to be, and what is it all about?

Rate capping is about cutting or attempting to cut public expenditure. It has an amazing history of maladministration. When the Government came to power they said that they would cut public expenditure and also intended to cut local authority public expenditure rather than central Government expenditure. The Government introduced a block grant system but that did not work. The Government introduced a system of targets and penalties whereby, if a council exceeded a target or spent more than Government wanted it to spend, or had rate increases more than the Government intended, they would penalise the council by taking grant from it. If the council put up the rates to compensate for the central Government grant being taken off, the Government would penalise that council even more by taking more grant from them.

That happened to the extent that some councils went out of grant—some of the London boroughs and the GLC did not receive grant. The Government had therefore lost their power in the legislation over the local authorities and could not dictate to them, so they introduced the idea of rate capping. Rate capping is direct central control of the day-to-day affairs of local authorities. It is an absolute disgrace that we are having this debate. Debates about Liverpool, Basildon or other local authority budgets should be taking place in the local authority's council chambers between the rival political groups on those councils. They would be determining what the local ballot box has traditionally determined, but the Bill destroys local democracy.

Until this Government, local elections were about one person, one vote, not one business person, two votes. One went to the bollot box to vote on the level of services in relation to levels of local taxation. Traditionally, in Conservative areas with Conservative-run councils, one got lower rates but poorer services. In areas run by Labour, one received better services and higher rates. However, if one did not agree with what the council did, one voted against it through the bollot box. That is what local elections were about, but they are not about anything now. The Government, this Chamber and the Whitehall computer are now saying what the balance should be between services and rate levels. In the process they have destroyed the traditional relationship between local and central Government.

Central Government has a role to play in determining the parameters in which local government functions. Government must lay down duties, responsibilities and statutory conditions on local government. Traditionally, the relationship was based on central Government putting duties and responsibilities on local authorities, determining what the central contribution should be for those facilities and fulfilling those duties. Freedom and democracy were shown by the fact that local government was free to do more and to provide better services to initiate and pioneer.

[Mr. Allan Roberts]

Many local authorities were pioneers. They pioneered the manufacture of gas, built large airports which made profits for the local community and established the police force. All these were achieved in advance of central Government and always with freedom, democracy and right of manoeuvre. The next Labour Government will restore that traditional relationship.

The devastating consequences of the order and the rate capping are not felt just in the rate-capped areas. I was on the Committee on the Bill which introduced rate capping; the Conservatives could only quote one leader of a Conservative council who supported the legislation. The Government could quote many leaders of Conservative minority groups in Labour councils who supported rate capping. The one Tory leader who was quoted was Ron Watson, the leader of Sefton council.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): My hon. Friend is making a good point and I am grateful to him for giving way. Does he not agree that the average rate rise this year will run at 18 per cent. Oxfordshire will have a rise of 27·9 per cent., Bedfordshire 33 per cent. and Buckinghamshire 30 per cent.? These councils are not the wicked Socialist councils like Newcastle upon Tyne which the Prime Minister has continued to prattle on about. These are Tory shires and they are not going to forget this Government for what they have done to them.

Mr. Roberts: I agree with that. Sefton is a metropolitan district which used to pride itself on low rates and poor services. The council has cut services to the bone and has done everything the Government wanted, but the leader of that council was the one quoted by Ministers——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We must confine ourselves to the geographical areas covered by the order.

Mr. Roberts: I am doing that, and I am quoting the justification of the Government, in their rate-capping legislation, for rate-capping Liverpool and the other local authorities. The Government quoted the leader of Sefton council on the assumption that, if one rate-capped Liverpool and the others, the consequence of dealing with the so-called overspenders was that there would be money available to redistribute to the so-called underspenders. Suddenly the underspenders have found that that is not true. In the next financial year Sefton faces a 26 to 30 per cent. rate increase as a result of massive cuts in rate support grant not only to itself——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I may not know the area extremely well, but I think Sefton district council is separate from Liverpool district council. Will the hon. Gentleman discuss that?

Mr. Roberts: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are being most unfair.

Mr. Wareing: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have your guidance. I believe that the area of Sefton was mentioned in an intervention from the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir. I. Percival) during my speech. There are implications for those who live outside a rate-capped area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The fact that perhaps the occupant of the Chair was not so conscientious in his responsibilities as he might have been during the hon. Gentleman's speech is no justification for him now being lax. "Erskine May" clearly states on page 619 that when a statutory instrument is confined

"to a particular geographical area or areas, discussion of other areas is out of order."

Mr. Roberts: I am speaking about the geographical areas and about the implications for those areas. The consequences are that there is no money because of the rate-capping of Liverpool and the other local authorities. That is a consequence of what is happening in the geographical area. Therefore, other local authorities are suffering as a result. That theme has permeated the whole of the debate. Why it should be suddenly different when I am speaking I do not know.

I state quite clearly that one of the justifications for rate-capping in these geographical areas was that if the Government dealt with the overspenders there would be money left for the underspenders. That is not true. Rate-capping those areas has not saved any money or provided any money for the so-called underspenders; otherwise Sefton would not be facing a 26 to 30 per cent. rate increase.

Sir Ian Percival: Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that at least 44·88p on 14 per cent. of the 25 per cent. which is threatened, is the precept of the Merseyside passenger transport authority, over which we in Sefton have no control, and which would have been 55p, another 7 per cent., if the Government had not curbed it the week before last?

Mr. Roberts: Besides arguing that rate-capping would help so-called underspenders, it was argued that abolition would help them. The leader of Sefton council——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If we are still on Sefton, we had better move on. I hope that the House will not persist in ignoring my remarks. The position is clear: we debate what is in the order, and Sefton is not mentioned.

Mr. Roberts: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am serious about the point of order. Throughout the debate, including the opening speeches of the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), reference has been made to the consequences of abolition and precepting on authorities. They are tied up with grant-related expenditures and rate-capping assessments. The consequences of rate capping in Liverpool cannot be separated from the abolition of Merseyside county council and the precepts, because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of order. It is basically the same as the one with which I have already dealt. The position is absolutely clear. Page 619 of "Erskine May" states:

"Where the effects of an instrument are confined to a particular geographical area or areas, discussion of other areas is out of order."

Sefton is not referred to in the instrument, and I hope that we have heard the last of Sefton during the debate. The hon. Gentleman will kindly confine himself to the areas specifically mentioned in the statutory instrument.

Mr. Roberts: Liverpool is on Merseyside, and I shall refer to Merseyside county council, and the consequences for Liverpool, which are the same as for the other districts in the area.

As a result of the abolition of Merseyside county council, which has led to the rate capping of Liverpool, the three precepts for all three joint authorities—the

police, fire and passenger transport authorities — aggregate to 77p. That is 4p more than the 73p which the county council levied for all its services in 1985-86, which included highways, trading standards, waste disposal and the arts, most of which must now be provided by district councils, and will be included in the rates in 1986-87.

Therefore, all the district councils of Merseyside, especially Liverpool, must find both a precept, which the Government have determined because the passenger transport authority and the other joint bodies are rate-capped as well as Liverpool, and money in the rates for the other services that are being handed to them as a result of abolition. The Merseyside authorities are suffering not only from a cut in rate support grant, but from an increased precept from the non-elected passenger transport authority and the other joint bodies. The Government, not those bodies, decided on the precept because those bodies, the city of Liverpool, and other local authorities, are rate-capped.

If one studies how the rate-capped local authorities have been selected, one sees how arbitrary the selection procedure has been. That is no accident because the councils are all Labour-controlled. It is surprising that none is Conservative-controlled. The authorities have been chosen for spending above GREAs and targets, and the criteria used are unfair and nonsense. GREAs are intended to be a way of distributing grant, rather than a normative spending level. The Government made that clear when GREAs were introduced in 1981, and it was confirmed by the Department of the Environment to the Audit Commission in 1984 and the National Audit Office in 1985.

As GREAs are not the instrument through which to determine rate levels and rate-capping, why are they being used now, instead of other measures, to justify rate-capping those authorities? The reason is that, if GREAs are used, Labour-controlled areas fall into the penalty box. Spending targets for individual authorities have been completely discredited. The Government have been forced to abandon such targets for 1986-87 in both England and Wales, yet they continue to use them for this purpose.

The idea that the voluntary sector is not suffering as a result of the rate-capping proposals is absolute nonsense. The abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC means that the rate-capped authorities and others must pick up the bill for funding voluntary organisations—the arts and non-arts—which were previously funded by county councils. The Liverpool council for voluntary services has identified 90 organisations which are in immediate danger of closure. The position is now criticial. With fewer than six weeks to go, the council for voluntary services writes:

"We are seeking urgent support. Redundancy notices are now being issued and schemes being closed down. If swift action is not taken, yet again Merseyside will suffer substantial job losses and cuts in services."

The voluntary sector and local authority services are suffering, and rates continue to increase. The Government are destroying local government democracy and the reason for local elections. They are trying to suggest that they will solve the problems of rate-capped authorities by a Green Paper on the poll tax, which they intend to implement over four Parliaments, which means that it will probably never be implemented.

Mr. Loyden: I wish to stress my hon. Friend's point about voluntary organisations. I was always of the opinion, which is now being proved wrong, that the Tory party was in favour of voluntary organisations. At present voluntary organisations in Liverpool will stop functioning because of the abolition of the Merseyside county council. The Secretary of State is asking them to approach the city council, which is rate-capped and has a shortfall in its budget of £37 million.

Mr. Roberts: I agree with my hon. Friend. When the Government announced the rate support grant settlement, they said to some local authorities, in anticipation of rate-capping other authorities, that certain amounts of grant would be clawed back from overspending authorities. Many local authorities, in anticipation of that, have invented a new phenomenon called flowback. They are planning deficit budgets, as Liverpool did last year with its illegal budget, on the assumption that, because of the rate-capping orders, money which was to be given to local authorities will be taken from them and redistributed to underspending authorities.

One such local authority next to Liverpool, which I cannot mention, is expecting £1·9 million flowback from rate-capped authorities. It is contemplating a deficit budget in anticipation of receiving that extra grant, which it may not get. It is doing a Liverpool and it will break the law. I hope that the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival), whose council is busily trying to lose his seat to the Liberals at the general election, will take that message back.

8.17 pm

Sir Ian Percival (Southport): Once upon a time there was a direct relationship between rates and the ballot box, because most people who paid rates voted. If they found the rates too high, they voted the controlling party out of office. A great deal has happened to change that and to strike at the hypothesis on which the case of the hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Roberts) was based.

In Liverpool 51 per cent. of the residents do not personally pay their rates. I do not complain about that, but one cannot ignore the fact that that means that 51 per cent. of voters have no interest in keeping rates down. Their only interest is in maintaining services, and I understand that. It is idle to ignore that such changes have taken place.

A further change is that at present 60 per cent. of the rates are paid by people who do not have a vote.

Ms. Harman: Yes they do.

Sir Ian Percival: The hon. Lady will have a chance to speak. Many of my constituents have businesses in Liverpool, so they are directly interested in the rates there. As they do not live there, they do not have a vote. Nevertheless, they conduct businesses and, I am happy to say, provide jobs for some of the constituents of the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing).

Between them, the business men pay 60 per cent. of the total rate but not one of them has a vote. So the relationship between rates and the ballot box has largely gone.

Mr. Dobson: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the people he is concerned about could do something immediately to stop their disfranchisement by living in Liverpool?

Sir Ian Percival: That is a very silly intervention. I am sure that the hon. Member for West Derby is happy that

[Sir Ian Percival]

some of my constituents pay rates in his constituency without being a burden upon it. They also provide jobs for his constituents.

Even despite these big changes, the system might work if we had the sense of responsibility about spending that we once had, and the same relationship between local and central Government. This does not exist any more; some authorities have been spending money like water.

Mr. Wareing: I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman that, even under this Government, 47 per cent. of expenditure is financed by rate support grant, which comes out of taxation, so even those people who do not pay rates contribute indirectly by their payment of taxes such as VAT and Customs duties on alcohol and tobacco.

Sir Ian Percival: The hon. Gentleman has highlighted another contribution that my constituents make to his. They probably pay a great deal more income tax per head than his constituents. That is right, because taxes are progressive. They contribute more and some of it goes to his constituents. That makes no dent in my argument.

Despite these changes, the system would work if some responsibility were shown about spending. But some Labour-controlled authorities have deliberately set out to embarrass the Government by wasteful spending.

Ms. Harman: That is nonsense.

Sir Ian Percival: The hon. Lady may not like it, but they are currying favour with voters who do not have to pay rates, at the expense of their political opponents. This wasteful expenditure falls directly on my constituents through the precepts and because so many of them pay rates in Liverpool. I say on behalf of my constituents, thank goodness some curbs have been placed on this spending.

The hon. Member for West Derby who so courteously gave way to me, as he always does, said one thing with which I do agree. I am glad somebody said it and that it came from the Opposition Benches. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who would not give way on a very important point about this two weeks ago, because he knew what the question would be and did not want to answer it, tried to blame everything on Labour mismanagement of Liverpool during the last two years. But the hon. Member for West Derby drew attention, very properly, to the fact that, for a decade before that, there was terrible mismanagement by the Liberals. The Labour party took over that legacy of those 10 years and, by gum, made it even worse. It ill behoves the Liberal spokesman to try to get away with it by blaming everything in the past on Labour.

However, we can blame what is happening now on Labour. That was one of the ironies of what the hon. Member for Bootle said when he complained about the precepts of the joint authorities. The joint authorities—I think that I am still in order geographically—represent the elements of centralised government which we could not abolish. What they are charging is not the result of abolition of a second tier. We could not abolish those. We could not abolish the passenger transport authorities for the time being. It may be that under the Transport Act, there might be separate schemes. The hon. Member for Bootle was complaining that these three joint boards are precepting for 77p as against 73p before. He says that that is very hard on Liverpool and on his own constituency —we must not mention that. We might make the same point about it if we were allowed to do so.

What a false point that is. All those three bodies are controlled by Labour politicians, who are spending all the money.

Mr. Allan Roberts: The proposed maximum precept is high because the authority has been denied entitlement to £25 million of block grant. The Government have taken the equivalent of a 14p precept off the joint boards by cutting their block grant by £25 million. The precept has been set not by Labour-controlled joint boards but by the Government.

Sir Ian Percival: They have been limited by the Government. Otherwise, they would have been even higher. That is what is so extraordinary about the hon. Gentleman's argument. What was his first point?

Mr. Allan Roberts: The bodies have received £25 million less in block grant.

Sir Ian Percival: I forgot it because it is such a bad point. The passenger transport authority could have spent anything up to £75 million and got a grant but it could not even keep its spending under that sum. It wanted to spend £103 million. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and I were here listening to the arguments for that. I am not sure whether the hon. Member for Bootle was also present. The PTA wanted to spend £103 million. we stopped it, and kept the sum down to £81 million. That body did itself out of all chance of getting grant, and would have spent yet another £21 million if not stopped, which would have been yet another 7 per cent. on our rates.

My constituents are thoroughly glad that these limitations have been made. Those of them who pay rates in Liverpool are glad that their rates are to be kept within some sort of reason by this order.

8.26 pm

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): This is one of the most absurd debates that I have heard in the House because we have no business going through the circumstances of local authorities about which we know nothing.

I freely admit that I know nothing about local authority expenditure and the need for services in Southport but, by the same token, the right hon. and learned Member for Southport (Sir I. Percival) knows nothing about circumstances in Southwark, and it is not his business to vote in favour of an order that sets the rate in Southwark. The Government are asking hon. Members to vote on Southwark's rates when they have hardly been mentioned and when hon. Members know nothing about them and care even less. That is a disgrace.

For people in Peckham, the most important considerations are what sort of job they can get, how much they are likely to get paid for it, what sort of home they have and whether they can afford it, what the area in which they live is like—whether it is clean and safe to go out at night—and what services they get, especially services for the elderly and children. Local authority expenditure in those respects is critical.

Private sector jobs will not be attracted to an area which is run down and choked with traffic and in which the infrastructure is poor. The local authority must increase

spending to maintain existing services and bring new jobs into the area. Private risk capital will not convert derelict sites in blighted areas.

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Ms. Harman: Public investment can, and does, provide the lead to private investment. The council should be encouraged, not deterred from taking that lead. It also has an important role as an employer. Most of the people in Peckham who have jobs work directly or indirectly for the public services. They work in the Health Service and the education service. Many work in the House in canteens, lifts and restaurants.

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Ms. Harman: If the Government would only allow it to, the council should take on many more staff as caretakers in estates where people feel unsafe at night, doing building works and repairs to private homes. They could be employed as home helps to allow elderly people to remain independent in their own homes, in day nurseries so that working parents could go out to work secure in the knowledge that their children were being well looked after and in day centres for the elderly or the handicapped so that the community can be sure that its most vulnerable members are being looked after. There is plenty that needs to be done in Peckham and plenty of people need jobs. One has only to walk around to see that.

If we have a fair system of finance for local authorities and if the Government recognise the urgent need to use public money to narrow the gap between richer and poorer areas, Southwark will be able to employ more people to do those vital jobs. That will mean that a young person, instead of leaving school and going on the dole or into a no-hope training scheme, could train as a bricklayer to build homes or train as a nursery nurse to look after small children. When one meets a school leaver in Peckham one must be careful about asking the usual question, "What will you do when you leave school?" More often than not, they say, "I suppose I will go on the dole."

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Ms. Harman: That is not because they lack motivation or initiative; it is just a recognition of the harsh realities in my constituency where in four of the eight wards, Brunswick, Liddle, Friary and Consort, more than 30 per cent. of them are unable to find work.

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Ms. Harman: In the Liddle ward unemployment has risen over 90 per cent. between 1981 and 1985. By reducing the amount that Southwark can spend, the Government are directly responsible for preventing the public and the private investment that could create jobs. I should like to see more Government funding in Southwark so that we can also increase the wages of those who have work.

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Ms. Harman: The men and women who are working hard to provide vital services such as caretaking and home helps are already so low paid that, as well as working five days a week or more, many of them still have to claim benefit. For that not only do they earn very little but they earn the derision of Conservative Members. I think that that is a disgrace.

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Ms. Harman: Housing is of critical importance. Southwark has the largest percentage of council housing stock in London and it is of critical importance in Peckham. The overwhelming majority of people are in council homes because they cannot possibly afford to buy their own. Peckham has one of the lowest average incomes in London and the council housing position is critical. There are 10,000 families on Southwark's waiting list, and there are 10,000 families wanting a transfer.

Mr. Gerald Bowden *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is not giving way.

Ms. Harman: There is empty land upon which the council could build new homes. It is unable to carry out the massive task in which it should be engaging of redesigning and refurbishing the deck access estates, which are not only unpopular but unhealthy and unsafe. For example, Gloucester grove estate was recently described by the national press as a "no-go" area when the postal workers stopped deliveries in protest at attacks on them. It is not difficult to understand the problems of the estate or to see how they could be remedied. Gloucester grove could be transformed into a desirable place to live if it was broken down into smaller units. It is too massive with over 1,000 flats. It could be transformed if the access to the flats was altered—at the moment tenants have to go up blind towers to reach the flats—if the refuse system was changed so that it efficiently coped with rubbish instead of efficiently breeding flies and constituting a fire hazard, if it had better transport which means more frequent bus services, if more people on the estate had jobs and if there were better leisure facilities in the area. Most of those factors are vital just to make it a decent place to live either as a pensioner or to bring up a young family. None of that is possible if there is a vice-like grip on council spending.

When Conservative or Liberal Members mention examples of expenditure which they think are wasteful, none of those figures, by any stretch of the imagination, are anything like the sum that needs to be spent to rehabilitate badly designed estates and to build new ones. Decent people have to continue to live in depressing and degrading housing. I have already mentioned the Gloucester grove estate, but the same applies to countless other estates in Peckham such as the Willowbrook estate, Aylesbury estate, Camden estate, north Peckham estate, and the Brandon estate. I mention that so that hon. Members can understand the size of the problem that needs to be faced.

Services are also very important in Peckham. I would like to mention social services, where Southwark has a good record. For example, it provides 11 home helps per thousand of the elderly population. In Tory areas such as Kingston, Surrey and Barnet there are fewer than four home helps per thousand of the population, which is 70 per cent. below the Government's guidelines. The Liberal Isle of Wight provides fewer than three home helps per thousand of the population. The Government are calling those councils responsible and calling Southwark council an irresponsible overspender. I believe that Southwark is a responsible council for trying to meet the needs of the people in the area. The Tory areas and the Liberal Isle of Wight are simply turning their backs on the needs of people in their areas. I should be interested to know

[Ms. Harman]

whether the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) supports the Isle of Wight in its appalling record of home help provision.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) will not respond to that. We shall confine ourselves to the areas mentioned in the order.

Ms. Harman: Another indicator of the responsibility of Southwark council is that it tries to provide a decent number of day nursery places. Out of 108 local authorities, Southwark is the eleventh highest in the provision of day nursery places. However, it still has only four day nursery places for every 100 children. Over and over again parents come into my surgery desperate for a day nursery place. Those are services that people want and that the council wants to provide but central Government dictatorship prevents the council from providing what people want.

The "irresponsibility" that the Government say they are trying to stamp out is what we call care. The Government are really stamping out jobs, services and the hopes of thousands of people in Peckham. The Department of the Environment is no longer worthy of that name. It has simply become a sub-division of the Treasury. It has abandoned its role in favour of simply being an arm of the Government's brutal economic policies.

8.36 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I oppose the order on principle. I strongly agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) at the beginning of her speech when she said that it is not the job of the House to fix rates for individual local authorities. That is the job of elected local councillors. If I had wanted to continue fixing rates, I would have stayed in local government and not come to the House. Those of us who have experience of rate fixing know that it is not a particularly easy task. It requires a great deal of detailed background information. It involves taking difficult decisions on priorities and settling competing claims for resources. We have no information before us tonight to enable us to do any such thing.

The Government are displaying their usual take it or leave it attitude. All we have before us is one scrappy flimsy piece of paper with 11 figures of maximum rates set out on it. That is not the way in which the House of Commons can judge whether what the Government are proposing is reasonable or unreasonable. However it is dressed up, it is not parliamentary scrutiny; it is simply a rubber-stamping charade which I believe brings the House into dispute. If there were no other grounds for objecting to the order, that, in my view, would be a powerful one.

I object to the order because of the impact of many of the cuts that appear to flow from it. In my own authority in Greenwich, I noted that the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), who will reply to the debate, said:

"Greenwich is being required to reduce its expenditure by 10 per cent. in real terms"—[*Official Report*, 31 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 1255.]

As a former leader of Greenwich council, I know what a problem that will be. That is the magnitude of the cut that is being forced on my local authority. The difficulty is that that cut is being taken at the last moment. No preparation has been made for any such reduction in spending. Throughout the current financial year we have seen, on the part of Greenwich and other rate-capped authorities, a continued and determined jacking-up of expenditure rather than any planned attempt to come to terms with reality. The difficulty of that is that when the crash comes and the axe falls it has to fall swiftly wherever the cuts can be made and that may not be where they ought to be made in any sensible decisions on priorities.

The spending limit for Greenwich is £95·3 million. The local authority has told me that a no-cuts budget including transferred GLC services would involve spending £116·2 million. Clearly, that leaves a shortfall of £20·9 million. I accept that there may be some hyping of the position by the London borough of Greenwich but, even allowing for that, it is still a massive cut to be made at short notice.

There is the strange situation of the transferred GLC services. There is a gap between what is allowed for the cost of these transferred services in the rate support grant settlement and what has been allowed in the rate limitation order. The shortfall for Greenwich is £780,000, for Islington it is £804,000 and for Lambeth is almost £1·4 million. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will explain how the Government can provide one definition for what is needed to meet the cost of these transferred services in the RSG settlement and another definition for the calculation of new rate limitation. This demonstrates once again the dubious basis on which rate limitation has been calculated.

One problem for all of us who object to rate capping on the basis that it will mean cuts—the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government referred to this—is the extraordinary virulence of the forecasts made this time last year. I have a document which was cirulated to every home in Greenwich by my local authority, predicting that rate capping would mean the sacking of up to 1,000 council workers. The leaflet gives a spine chilling list of the effects of rate capping:

"more delays and queueing for all council services; substantial rent increases for council tenants; council housing taking longer to repair; increased charges on services for the elderly and handicapped; less nursery places for under-fives; home helps cut back; less books available in libraries; swimming pools, sports centres closed; roads and pavements not being swept regularly; refuse not being collected as often; community groups and small businesses losing their grant; ending training and apprenticeship schemes for school leavers.".

Not one of those things has happened. Not a single redundancy has occurred. In fact, the reverse has taken place, as the council has taken on many more employees and is launching new services, despite rate capping.

Greenwich is not the only place where we were told there would be the end of civilisation as we have come to know it. The leaflet points out that rate capping would affect not just Greenwich but the neighbouring boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark and Lambeth. It states:

"The effects on south London would be catastrophic for it could mean the loss of 6,000 jobs. The total could rise to 10,000 with the proposed cuts to ILEA and GLC services. That means thousands fewer people buying goods in local shops, and firms and factories threatened with closure."

My council suggested that that extraordinary catalogue of doom and disaster would flow from rate capping.

I understand the point that we have come through the first year of rate capping and perhaps the position will not be as good in the second, but I believe that, if hon. Members and local authorities had not cried wolf so long

and so loud last year, it would be easier to believe what is said this year. Conservative Members cannot be surprised, after what they prophecised last year has not come about, if Ministers, and, more importantly, our electors have some doubts about the prophesies they are now making in the second year of rate capping.

My next point arises from what my hon. Friend the Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said and relates to the so-called rates rebellion last year. Happily, we are not offered an action replay this year and local authorities are not refusing to levy a rate. I want to hark back to last year. It is worth reminding ourselves that the annual report of the Audit Commission, which was published last July, referred to the failure to levy a rate. It stated:

"The ratepayers in each of those authorities have suffered severe losses, that would not have been incurred if rate demands had been issued in April. That the authorities concerned include some of the most deprived in England and Wales makes such waste even more deplorable."

I strongly endorse that conclusion.

The Audit Commission went on to set out what it saw as its role. It said:

"if local electors are content to have their affairs administered in this manner in the last analysis that is their affair. The auditors' duty is to bring the extent of any loss that is being incurred, to the attention of the local electors—so that they are properly informed."

I wholeheartedly endorse that approach. Sadly, it is not being carried out. I have had a lengthy and not very profitable correspondence with the Audit Commission asking it to quantify the severe losses that have been inflicted on my ratepayers and the ratepayers of other local authorities. If it is the auditors' job to inform local electors, for London that must be done before 8 May this year, because that is the only opportunity in a four-year period that Londoners get to vote for their local authority. If we are asking the electors of the boroughs to make up their minds whether they want their affairs conducted in such a way, the auditors have a duty to tell my electors and those of other boroughs just what those severe losses are. I very much hope that the Under-Secretary of State will provide us with helpful information.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's speech which is, as usual, an important one. I should be delighted if the hon. Gentleman wants to talk to Ministers about this matter. Although the Audit Commission is totally independent of us, as it is of the hon. Gentleman, this is such an important matter that I should be happy to assist him in drawing it to the attention of the commission.

Mr. Cartwright: I am grateful for that offer, but I must in all honesty tell the Minister that I have written to the Secretary of State and sent him copies of all the correspondence. The Secretary of State very helpfully said that he would refer the matter back to the Audit Commission, with which I had been corresponding for some months. That did not seem to be a terribly helpful response. If the Minister is offering a more positive response, I shall be happy to take up the offer.

We have had limited experience of the rate-capping arrangement. Our experience in the past year confirms the judgment that my colleagues and I made of the principle of rate capping last year. It is politically inept; it is a constitutional absurdity, and it represents a triumph for centralised bureaucracy. For those reasons, we shall vote against the order.

8.47 pm

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I supported rate capping last year, and I support it this year. During the 1984-85 winter, when we considered part I of the Rates Bill, my local authority of Leicester was rate-capped at a rate of 25·22p in the pound. By rate capping, I am convinced that the Government and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State saved ratepayers in Leicester and in the other 17 local authorities more than £300 million. The CBI has always welcomed rate capping as a successful measure.

Is the order tough enough? I believe that my feeling is similar to that of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). We were threatened last year. We are threatened now that there will be massive job losses at the city council's headquarters. However, more employees have been taken on since Leicester was rate-capped. There are now 4,126 employees. The jobs which we were told would be lost have continued. Sometimes, rate capping seems to be an advantage to some Labour authorities—a point that concerns me a little.

I would question the basis on which the list was drawn up. I do not criticise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, but it seems strange that Basildon and Thamesdown, which behaved in similar ways to Leicester, have been rate-capped this year but Leicester has not. I understand that last year £150,000 was spent by my authority on fighting rate-capping even before the council was rate-capped. My concern would be——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member was present when I issued reproaches earlier for straying outside the order. I hope that he will speak to the authorities mentioned in the order.

Mr. Bruinvels: The point I was trying to make is that once an authority is nominated, it is not totally bound to the requirement of keeping to the order, in the sense that although it says that it is, it threatens massive job reductions, which do not materialise. I have tried to assist the House by giving the example of my local authority following the order that we passed a year ago. Once the rate was levied it went ahead——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not a re-run of 1985. Would the hon. Member please speak to the order before the House?

Mr. Bruinvels: I would like the order to be withdrawn and to be re-submitted with my local authority included in it. I believe that if Leicester had been put on the local authority list it might have learnt a lesson, as would other local authorities which have not learnt a lesson and which continue to be a burden on the taxpayer and continue to damage the prospects of businesses, which we wish to encourage in our local areas. Those businesses have been penalised by new rates being levied and by local authorities, such as Leicester, being left off the list, and introducing a mammoth rate rise.

Far from cutting out waste by rate capping, it is made up in the following year. I should like to describe a typical example of what that might mean to local authorities. One defect in the order is that a local authority such as Leicester can levy 25·22p in the pound in the rate-capped year, and the next year, when it is let off the hook, it can set 45·5p in the pound, which is a city rate rise of 80 per cent. Those

[Mr. Bruinvels]

authorities give a notional figure for the year when they were rate-capped. The notional figure would have been 39·9p in Leicester's case if they had not been rate-capped. In Camden, for example, where I fought an honourable fight with the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) for the local council a few years ago—he won on that occasion, but he will not win next time—we saw a large amount of public expenditure by the council and I wish to see an end to that. I want an end to the jobs for the boys that some local authorities give. I know of a case in the local authority that I represent where my Labour opponent was found a job within three months of being elected as a Labour candidate. It worries me that all those local authorities are taking advantage of their position.

I urge the Minister to justify why some authorities have been identified in the order and others have not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the Minister attempts to do so, I shall have to rule him out of order also. The hon. Member must recognise that he is being unfair to his colleagues from Leicester who might reasonably have assumed that Leicester would not be debated tonight. I hope that he will confine himself, as I have instructed him, to the order before the House.

Mr. Bruinvels: I am grateful for your advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is no longer advice; it is an instruction to the hon. Member.

Mr. Bruinvels: The order concerns all rate bills of the authorities that have been nominated. My concern is that those authorities are allowed to levy rates that will be protected. I urge the Minister to give the undertaking that other authorities will continue to be considered, because it is a rates blow in local authorities out of the rate-capped area for the residents to be suddenly presented with massive rate rises. Basildon has probably been warning everyone in the area that it is still fighting for its services and protecting jobs. No doubt other authorities that are not rate-capped are also doing so.

The principle of rate capping and the order must be welcomed by all those who believe that not enough consideration is being given to businesses that pay the largest rates and receive no opportunity to be properly represented. A local authority says that it has a mandate, but it has a limited mandate to increase services, because the mandate is probably no more than 30 to 40 per cent. of the electorate.

We must consider the real rate for the future. We do not want artificially depressed rates whacked up the following year, because the authority is not rate-capped. Ratepayers are entitled to a better opportunity and full representation. Chambers of commerce and industry, including Leicester, are worried about the rates burden and the fact that jobs could be lost. Many businesses have become political shuttlecocks in hung councils. We must oppose any failure of the local authority to consult with businesses about the rates that they would like, so that a fair accord can be established between businesses and the local authorities. Both sides must be properly considered. Huge rate rises and any political activities, whether in Basildon, Thamesdown or Leicester, which abuse ratepayers' money are anathema to society.

The order will encourage other local authorities to take care or they will be rate-capped. I am envious of those authorities which have been rate-capped today. I look forward to Leicester being included in the next round.

8.55 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Camden council and consequently the Camden people have received no central Government grant since 1980-81. The last time that they received any grant from central Government was 1979-80 when central Government's contribution was equal to 23 per cent. of Camden's local expenditure. If the Government were to finance 23 per cent. of Camden's expenditure now, it would amount to a grant of £30 million. Despite the absence of any grant and Government cries of profligacy, the level of local rates in Camden has scarcely changed since 1981-82, when it was 89·4p in the pound. It is now 90·2p, which is an increase of 2·9 per cent. During that time the retail price index has increased by 25 per cent. If Government spending was only 2·9 per cent. in relation to that increase, we would be considerably better off, especially in view of what they spend their money on.

The Government have decided to set a limit on Camden's spending, which amounts to a cut in real terms of 14 per cent. I do not believe that the Minister will be able to argue with those facts. However, the Government-imposed limit is not all, even if those who write Ministers' speeches seem to believe that it is funny. The abolition of the GLC is likely to lead to additional calls on Camden's expenditure. The Government are allowing Camden £16·3 million. Camden estimates that the cost of the GLC services that will take over will be about £25 million. It may be that the figure is somewhere in between—I am prepared to accept that—but if it is, any additional sum above £16·3 million will have to be met from Camden's other spending.

On top of that, the Government have made no allowance for the increase in Camden council spending on homelessness. Net expenditure on homelessness as recently as 1983-84 was £782,000. This year, it will be £7·6 million—an increase of nearly 10 times, which results from several causes. There has been an increase in homelessness, with a massive number of people in temporary accommodation, and there has been a massive increase in the number of people applying on the grounds that they are homeless. Many of these are large families that need substantial places in which to live. The result has been an increase in the costs that Camden incurs in trying to deal with the problem.

In 1983-84, the average cost to the council of placing people in bed and breakfast was £90 per week, but the current cost is £174 a week. That is partly because there has been an increase in charges, and partly because the council properly decided that it had been leaving homeless families in accommodation that was dangerous and unsafe. Indeed, some people placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by the council were burnt to death. It is right and proper that the council has knocked 22 of the cheapest hotels off its list. That is a step forward, but the Government are making no allowance.

Another massive reduction in income has resulted from the DHSS decision to reduce board and lodging limits, which has reduced its contribution by between £26 and £43·50 per member of a family. No hotel in the borough of Camden meets the council's environmental and health

requirements and charges less than the new Government limits. Consequently, the council is making up the difference. The Government, after deciding to punish the homeless instead of getting at the landlords who rip off their tenants, are punishing the ratepayers who, through the council, are trying to do something about the problem.

The estimated cost to Camden next year of the Government's measure is an increase of £3 million in its spending on the homeless, and no compensatory payment is being made. The council will also lose GLC stress money, which would have made a considerable contribution to preventing rates increasing next year. Camden has always had certain special features. Three main line stations disgorge from time to time people who need much attention and help from the council. There is a big concentration of hospitals and the council has to provide services such as social workers. Land costs are high, and continue to rise. That has other knock-on costs on council spending. As my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) pointed out, we feature, lamentably, in all the stress index factor lists.

It is worth pointing out that one of our main problems is that hon. Members representing inner city seats have to put up with decisions being imposed on our electorate by those who appear to have no conception of what is going on. It is worth comparing the circumstances in my constituency with those in the constituency of the Secretary of State for the Environment. The density of population in my constituency is 34 times that of Mole Valley. The number of under-16s living with one parent in my constituency is five times the level in Mole Valley. The number of households that do not live in self-contained homes is eight times the level in Mole Valley. The number of unemployed in my constituency is six times the level in Mole Valley, and that ignorance from the Secretary of State is a sign of what he is up to.

This debate should be unnecessary. Labour Members should not have to argue the merits of spending on the authorities concerned. It is startling that the Government are forcing the House to discuss the minutiae of local government spending.

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South) *rose*——

Mr. Dobson: I shall not give way.

The Government are rejecting the basis of our democracy. Pluralism has always been at its heart and the Labour party still stands for it. We believe in separate and distinct sections of power and influence, and in the right to dissent. The Government believe in curtailing, crippling, stifling and subduing the right to dissent. They are opposed to people having the right to decide what they want in their locality.

Camden council is imperfect — it was when I was leader of the council and even more so when the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) was leader. The people of Camden should be able to decide what the council spends and what services it provides. That is what we have always had in the past and it is deplorable and despicable that we have a Government that say that the Tory party in these localities has sunk so low that it stands no chance of being elected to bring in the Government's policies.

If the Government had any confidence in Tory policies and in local Tory parties, they would be prepared to let the local electorate decide what it spent and what services are provided. This is a gutless and undemocratic Government. The sooner we get rid of them, the better.

9.4 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): Various criticisms have been made of the borough of Lambeth, and I should like to reply to some of them. It will be evident to anybody in the Chamber that Lambeth ranks high on any single index of deprivation or, indeed, on indices of multiple deprivation, whether on the Department of the Environment's figures on this matter or on other studies.

There has been an implied criticism that boroughs such as Lambeth simply wish to raise rates ad infinitum. I stress that that is not the case. As the deputy leader of the council today stressed to me, Lambeth is not requesting the right to raise rates still further. The council recognises the detrimental effects on living standards caused by high rates which effectively pass on to local people the costs of providing essential services inadequately provided by the Government.

The problems which Lambeth faces are these. Since the Government came to power in 1979, there has been a year-by-year reduction in central Government grants to the borough, a total of £113 million between 1979 and 1985 if the 1978-79 RSG is taken as the base year. That is the equivalent of Lambeth's annual spending in one year which has been taken away from it by the cuts in the rate support grant and by other Government cuts.

The Government also fail to recognise the problems which will be caused for Lambeth following abolition of the GLC, exacerbating the concern of organisations now funded by the GLC which have an uncertain future, granted the lack of guarantee of alternative provision of finance.

The so-called Richmond and transitional schemes mean that many groups are now turning to Lambeth council or making representations to me as a Member of Parliament or to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser), requesting additional cash aid to stave off the issuing of redundancy notices.

There are in essence two objectionable issues behind the order. One is the starting point on the grant-related expenditure assessment, GREA, and the second is the penalties involved. According to the Department of the Environment, GREA is meant to represent

"for each authority the cost of a similar standard of service which takes account of variation in need".

The present formula fails to reflect Lambeth's needs in several respects — for example, the cost of hospital social workers for authorities with large hospitals in their areas such as my constituency, which includes St. Thomas's hospital and is bordered by King's college hospital; and the cost of fulfilling the council's obligations under section 1 of the Race Relations Act 1976.

The largest single example of inequity, however, is the so-called 30p issue. The Government in 1981-82 urged authorities to increase rents by £3·25, and £2·95 of this tallied with a deduction made on housing subsidy, but an extra 30p increase was encouraged.

The Government calculated the total income throughout the country that 30p would produce, then deducted it pro rata against revenue account deficits. The result is that Lambeth's deduction is not 30p but £1·70, an

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

over-charge on GREA of £3·6 million which, with penalty, means a cost in cash terms of £7·2 million to Lambeth in 1986-87.

A range of products is at risk, as illustrated in an answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), only a few days ago—a range of some 50 projects whose bids and submissions total some £2,065,000. However, only £1,300,000 will be made available to meet this. What is the economic basis for this policy? The Minister cannot justify it upon the monetarist ground of crowding out private expenditure by public expenditure. He ought to know that over 95 per cent. of the council houses in England and Wales are constructed by private contractors. Every £100 of cuts imposed on local authorities mean that £95 is taken away from the rotarians and the other small builders who voted with enthusiasm for this Government but who now find that they are unemployed.

The result of a two-thirds cut in the council house budget means that company liquidations in the construction sector have risen from 1,000 a year in 1980 to nearly 2,000 in 1984. Hundreds of thousands of workers are row unemployed. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands — indeed, millions — of houses are unfit for human habitation because they lack basic amenities. That is the irony of the Government's policy. Only last October a leader in the *Financial Times* said:

"Monetarism is dead—official."

The Government have abandoned monetary targets. Why do they not abandon these targets for local authorities and respect their right to reflect the wishes of their electors in the ballot box rather than in the black boxes of the Department of the Environment?

9.11 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I commend many of the Opposition speeches, in particular the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). He went straight to the heart of our objection to the order.

At the heart of traditional Conservative principles lies the idea of freedom. This was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). Freedom of the individual has been the Conservative battle cry down the ages. Their claim is that freedom of the individual is not possible unless people can form themselves into associations or institutions, free from interference from or control by the state.

Mr. Waldegrave: Hear, hear.

Mr. Straw: I am glad to hear that the Minister, the hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), supports that proposition. The notion of freedom lies behind the Conservative party's subscription to private enterprise. It lay behind the Prime Minister's 1979 rhetoric about rolling back the frontiers of the state. It also lay behind the claim that town hall should come before Whitehall. So strong was this idea that the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government devoted a whole book to the subject, entitled "The Binding of Leviathan." Generous to a fault, he even gave me a copy of this book——

Mr. Powley: Was it a signed copy?

Mr. Straw: No, it is not yet signed. He gave me a copy of his book at the end of the proceedings on the Rates Bill. I shall not embarrass him by quoting from his book, despite the undoubted boost that this would give to what I imagine are now its flagging sales.

Mr. Waldegrave: They are entirely flat.

Mr. Straw: The Minister says that they are entirely flat. However, in one area of our national life after another this Government have turned the traditional Conservative value of freedom of choice upon its head. Indeed, they have torn up page after page of what the Minister said was central to the heart of the old Conservatism. The frontiers of the state have most obviously been rolled forward in the areas of law and order and unemployment. The 4 million unemployed know of no land beyond the frontiers of the authoritarian state. Their abject dependence upon the power of the state is total.

As for local government, the new Conservative party has abolished those councils to whose policies it took objection, to which the ever dirty and cheap chairman of the Conservative party was candid enough to testify. The present Government are seeking to deny to councillors freedom to speak as they choose. So extreme is this proposal that the Government have been unable to convince their loyal supporters in local government and in the other place of the rightness of their action.

Alongside all this, two years ago the Government took the power directly to control the budgets and the rates of every single local authority in the land. This order affects only 11 authorities, but we shall do well to remember that the Rates Act 1984 under which this order is made contains the power to control the budgets of every local authority. This order is but the apex of a vast framework of controls and threat of controls that lie as a pall over the work of every one of the 24,000 councillors in this land.

Many of my hon. Friends have spoken with great eloquence and knowledge about the effect that these orders will have upon their communities, and there is no need for me to repeat what they have said. Hon. Members who represent Hackney, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Mr. Roberts), and hon. Members who represent Liverpool, Southwark, Camden and Lambeth all have great knowledge of information about, and experience of, their areas, and know what is likely to benefit their constituents. Such knowledge, information and experience is far greater than ever this Government or any other central Government could have.

We have heard a great deal about Lambeth. I declare an interest because I am a ratepayer in Blackburn, which was almost rate-capped last year and of Lambeth which was rate-capped last year and this year and, no doubt will be next year. The Minister gave himself away because he seemed to think that I would be pleased that my rates have gone down by £20 and that they might have gone down by a further £120. One of the many things that separate his side from ours is that we are willing to pay for public services. Those of us who have broad backs and relatively high incomes—I count myself and my hon. Friends in that—think it is right that we should pay for decent services for the rest of the population. I do not begrudge the money that I pay to Lambeth. I begrudge some of the taxes taken from me to pay for wasteful expenditure on Trident far more than I begrudge the money I pay towards the services provided in Lambeth.

As I have said time and again, I look upon the £550 in rates that I was paying before rate capping on what is not altogether a modest-sized house as a good bargain for the services that I and my children receive. Moreover, I look upon it as a reasonable contribution towards those people who are less well off in that borough than we are.

Sadly, and just for the moment, Basildon has only Conservative representatives. It will only be temporary, as last year's county election results show and as this year's district council election results will show. The hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) criticised his council, but, although it has a different political complexion from his, he was willing to say that his council had done good things. Repeatedly, hon. Members who represent Basildon district have denigrated the achievement of the people in Basildon council. Never once have we heard them applauding the work of that council or the fact that its work was applauded for efficiency by the Audit Commission. What is more, we never once heard that Basildon is being rate-capped, that this Government have taken control of Basildon, despite the fact that Basildon is not receiving a single penny piece by way of central Government support. All the services in Basildon are being paid for directly by its ratepayers. What effrontery the Government have to tell the people of Basildon how to spend their own money.

Mr. Amess: I am rather surprised at what the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) says, because he clearly did not listen to my opening remarks. I spent a quarter of my speech saying what a fine town Basildon was. What annoys me and my hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) is that many of the achievements of which I am rightly proud and about which we read in propaganda sheets such as *Link*, are claimed by the council when in fact many of them are due to the good work of the Government and the development corporation.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Gentleman makes my point entirely. He did praise the development corporation and even had the cheek to praise the Government for their contribution in winding up the development corporation and stopping Basildon from being a new town. I am glad he praised the new town, because Basildon is a Labour achievement. It was the Labour party that got the new towns going, and Basildon would never have achieved what it has achieved if there had not been a partnership between the new town development corporation on the one hand and its excellent district council on the other.

Swindon has been discussed, which is a Labour-controlled council. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Swindon is not in his place. Swindon has an excellent authority and it has expanded as a new town without any help from central Government. It has been successful but the Secretary of State is penalising it for its success. He is doing so despite the fact that its growth in expenditure since 1979, at about 103 per cent., is far less than that of central Government over the same period.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels) asserted that Leicester should have been included in the order. I have no doubt that that is one reason why he will vote against it. Leicester was not rate-capped this year but it is suffering from the consequences of being rate-capped last year. The House will recall that last year the Government proposed that Leicester's rate should be cut nearly in half. They claimed — no doubt they were whipped on by the two temporary Conservative Members for the city, the hon. Member for Leicester, East and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer)—that Leicester could live off its savings and balances. Having said—*[Interruption.]* I think that the Secretary of State said "cock-up".

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): I said that the hon. Gentleman should not be cocky.

Mr. Straw: I shall move on to the cock-up. The right hon. Gentleman's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), was the Secretary of State for cock-ups. Having said that Leicester's rate should be halved, he changed his mind and said that there should be a cut of only a quarter. That was an error rate, as I think the Department of Health and Social Security describes these things, of only 100 per cent. The Opposition warned at the time, especially my hon. and Learned Friend the Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner), that the people of Leicester would be forced to pay dearly for the vindictiveness of their Conservative Members. To restore a 25 per cent. cut involves a 33 per cent. increase, and as Leicester was left last year without resources to meet immediate commitments the increase is likely to be a great deal more. The rate increases which the people of Leicester are to face are the direct responsibility of the Government and of Leicester Conservative Members, who urged a course of madness upon the Government for which their constituents are now having to pay.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: What message will the hon. Gentleman give the ratepayers of Leicester who saw the city rate-capped and a low rate? They were grateful to the two Conservative Members who campaigned for that and lobbied the then Secretary of State. They now find that the rates have shot up by 80 per cent. At the same time the local council is spending money on a Nelson Mandela park. It is trying to twin with Nicaragua and is imposing irrelevant and cheap Labour party propaganda upon Leicester which the ratepayers and those running businesses in the city are opposed to desperately. Both ratepayers and business people want to get on with bringing more people to work in the city and not fewer.

Mr. Straw: The message that I give to the hon. Gentleman is that what is good for Leicester is a matter for the people of Leicester, and that that is a matter for them to decide. They showed clearly in the shire county elections of 1985 that they supported the Labour party. The hon. Gentleman would have lost his seat, as would his hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South, if they had been up for election as well. I am sure that that will be made equally clear in the May elections.

Much has been made of the fact that some of the dire warnings of the rate-capped authorities last year of the effect of rate capping upon jobs and services have not come to pass. My answer to that is "Not yet". In any event the fact that they have not is no thanks to the Secretary of State or his predecessor. To the extent that the consequences have not yet occured, that is due partly to the factors to which my hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) referred in an intervention, and partly due to authorities resorting to a number of accountancy arrangements, which, whatever their

[Mr. Straw]

technical differences, have the common characteristic of enabling authorities to pay later for expenditure which they incur now.

Apparently the Secretary of State is opposed to these arrangements. He had better say now whether he deplores or applauds these authorities in so far avoiding cuts. It is a matter of record that his rates and expenditure limits would require a reduction in expenditure by Greenwich of 10 per cent. in real terms, by Hackney of over 12 per cent. and Lewisham by 14 per cent. That is the direct result of rate capping. That is what the Under-Secretary of State said in an Adjournment debate on 31 January. These cuts have not been achieved yet, but the point for the Secretary of State and his Ministers to acknowledge is that, if the cuts are achieved, they can only mean equivalent cuts in staff and services and in the jobs in private firms, so many of which directly depend on the public service. Is that what the Government want? Do they want cuts of the magnitude which the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment spoke about? If not, it is time that the Government took account of the damage that they are doing in these areas and of the crisis that they are creating.

Local government needs no lectures from central Government about the accounting devices. Central Government have corrupted and abused established accounting conventions to cover up the failure of their own policies no more so than in their use of the proceeds of the sale of the public's capital in nationalised industries, to offset current expenditure and current tax cuts. The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), a former Treasury Minister, described that in his own way as dubious.

As traditional Conservatives know only too well, one objection to using the central apparatus of the state to make decisions which should rightfully be made at local level, is that, while it is easy to centralise power, it is far more difficult to collect centrally and then to use all the necessary information to exercise that power wisely. Nowhere do we see that process operating better—or worse—than in rate capping. The effects there are arbitrary, unfair and sometimes wholly unanticipated.

The system is unfair because of the measures used to determine rate capping. Target is one measure, but that is so unfair that the Secretary of State has made much of the fact that he has now abolished it. Grant-related expenditure assessment is a second measure. That system, as the Secretary of State knows only too well, was never designed to be used for control purposes. While the Secretary of State's predecessor described the GREAs as robust and objective, the present Secretary of State has described them as byzantine in their complexity and impossible to understand. It is obvious that the GREAs cannot be both byzantine and impossible to understand and also robust and objective.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): That is right.

Mr. Straw: The Secretary of State says that he is right and that his right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) is wrong.

Of course the Secretary of State is right, but why then, is he using a system that is byzantine in its complexity and impossible to understand? Why does the Secretary of State pretend that the system is a fair one with which to judge individual authorities?

A comparison of the increase in authorities' spending is no base to determine rate capping. We have heard much from the Secretary of State about the amounts by which rate-capped local authorities have increased their expenditure since the Government came to power. I must tell the Secretary of State that of the 11 authorities that have been rate-capped, six have increased their expenditure by less than central Government have increased their spending. We do not hear much about the fact that they have only increased their spending at or below the level of central Government. Lambeth, Haringey, Islington, Thamesdown and Liverpool have all matched or been below central Government spending.

I had the Library working on these figures all day. The figures for local government are freely available but the Library was working on central Government figures as the Government have stopped providing any information about the expansion of central Government's current spending. The figures cannot be found in the public expenditure White Paper and telephone calls to the Treasury could not elucidate that information. The Government have stopped counting their own current expenditure.

Dr. Cunningham: I wonder why.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend says he wonders why, I admit that I wonder why as well. I fancy it is because the Government are embarrassed that they came to power pledging to cut public spending and that they have hoisted public spending by keeping 4 million people unemployed and building ludicrous nuclear submarines.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Oh, really.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Member for Leicester, East says, "Oh, really," but we shall see when the orders for the nuclear submarines are cancelled.

We hear that Camden's expenditure has increased by 147 per cent. Why do we not hear about Brentwood, an urban Conservative authority, which has had an expenditure increase of 145 per cent.? West Wiltshire's expenditure has risen by 145 per cent. We hear of Hackney's expenditure rising and that has risen from a very low base, but what about the City of London? Hackney looks like an authority run by church mice when compared with the City of London. Hackney's expenditure has risen by 172 per cent. while the City of London has increased its expenditure by 300 per cent. over the past seven years. Will the Under-Secretary of State say anything about that when she replies to the debate? Will the City of London be rate-capped? Of course it will not be.

There is then the effect of rate capping upon Conservative-controlled shire councils. Rate capping was sold to a sceptical Conservative audience on the basis that it would help them. Last year, the former Secretary of State claimed:

"the more favourable targets which we have been able to give low-spending authorities for 1985-86 have been possible only through the savings which have been achieved in public expenditure terms by rate-capping the highest spenders."

He went on to say, and I hope the Secretary of State agrees with this:

"Thus, low-spending authorities will benefit from rate capping."—[*Official Report*, 16 January 1985; Vol. 71, c. 416-17.]

The truth is the reverse. Low-spending authorities have been hit by rate-capping. Rate capping was explicitly designed to bring down the expenditure of rate-capped authorities. Those authorities were bound to earn more grant and, as that grant comes from a fixed pool, it would be taken away from the lower spending Conservative-controlled authorities.

That is so mad as to be almost unbelievable but, in support of my contention that is happening, I must quote Mr. John Banham, the controller of the Audit Commisssion. He said of the system of which the Secretary of State is the proud architect:

"If I were asked to design a system that would produce more waste and inefficiency . . . it is not immediately certain to me what additional complications I would build in."

I do not claim to be clairvoyant but last year I predicted what would happen. When we concluded the debate last year I asked how many more times we would have to ask the Secretary of State about the effect on Conservative-controlled councils. I said:

"Does he not understand that if all the authorities did what he told them and all spent at GREA, rates in Berkshire would have to go up by 20 per cent. and rates in Essex would have to go up by 25 per cent?"—[*Official Report*, 6 February 1985; Vol. 72, c. 1018.]

I had a wonderfully considered reply from the former Secretary of State. It is no wonder that he was fired. He said, "That is silly." When I continued he said, "That is stupid." What has happened? Have the rates of Essex and Berkshire remained stable as a result of rate capping? I see the Secretary of State is smiling. It is true that I got the rates in Berkshire wrong because they have only increased by 13 per cent. but rates in Essex have increased by 19 per cent. It is a Conservative-dominated council. It is supported by the Liberals and the SDP. Across the country what was predicted has come true more quickly than I could have expected. Buckinghamshire is raising its rates by 30 per cent. Dorset by 20 per cent, Lincolnshire by 22 per cent, Norfolk by 19 per cent. and West Sussex by 19 per cent. Will the Under-Secretary tell us who is now being silly and stupid?

Conservative Members should not believe that once the brave new world has dawned and the Green Paper "Paying for local government" has been implemented in full their troubles will be over. Business rates in Conservative-controlled areas will rocket as a result of the changes. Collecting the poll tax will be a nightmare. For all the synthetic nonsense about the way in which the changes will improve local accountability, the full apparatus of centralised control will remain. More power will be given to central Government through their direct control of the income of the business rate and its level, and rate capping and poll tax capping will continue.

All that will occur because of the triumph of Treasury Ministers over the Secretary of State, because of their failure to represent the interests of local Government, and because of their refusal to get their brain around the fact that even with their economic policy there is no economic case for controlling what local authorities spend from their own resources. If the Government deny that, let them spell out why the United States and West Germany have never found such controls necessary, despite espousing similar economic principles but with markedly more successful results.

On Saturday, the Secretary of State, no doubt with his acolytes, will attend the Conservative local Government conference in a vain attempt to prepare the faithful for their coming annihilation at the district council elections in May. The Secretary of State was so worried about the attendance at this conference that he wrote to all Conservative councillors in January to encourage them to turn up. His letter is illuminating. First, he thanked all the councillors for their hard work

"in maintaining the thin blue line in town and county halls up and down the country"—

a line so thin that it will be broken with ease in May. He continued:

"yours is often a thankless task, with poor rewards and long hours away from your families,"

For once the Secretary of State is right. It was once a pleasure to serve on a local authority, a thankful task with great satisfactions. It has become a thankless task with poor rewards because of the actions of the Government in wrecking the relationship between the town hall and Whitehall and by denying basic freedoms to authorities.

The Secretary of State continued:

"we are all agreed that the present Local Government finance system is unfair, and stifles accountability, and is at the heart of the many conflicts between Local and Central Government over the years."

The Secretary of State was also right when he said that. Rate capping lies at the core of this crazy, byzantine, impossible and unfair system. If the Secretary of State had the courage of his convictions he would be voting with us tonight against this order.

9.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I have been extremely interested in listening to this debate. In spite of all the anxieties, worries, complaints and hysteria about this measure, only six out of 11 Labour authorities have been defended this evening by hon. Members. I expected a great deal more from those hon. Members who are concerned about the expenditure of local authorities.

We have had representations from Hackney, Liverpool, Greenwich, Camden and Lambeth. We had a representation from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on behalf of Southwark and also representations from Sefton. I will now make a representation from Kingston. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey not only managed to talk about Southwark but also, incidentally, about Lambeth and Liverpool—that is par for the course.

When my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government opened this debate he predicted that we would have a fair old litany of complaints about the problems that ratecapping will produce for authorities. There has not been a word of honest regret that the actions of authorities such as Camden and Lambeth are so irresponsible that they are the ones which are bringing local government into disrepute.

The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) complained that local government was being over-centralised by wicked central Government. The present state of local government has nothing to do with central Government. It is due to the irresponsible attitude of the Labour-held local authorities. They have set themselves up to try to distort and operate against central Government in a wilful way which has misdirected their efforts.

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

A great deal has been made by Opposition Members about local authority spending. They have suggested that the rate limitation order introduced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has had as dire an effect on Conservative authorities as it has had on Labour authorities. It is true that most local authorities spend a great deal of money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Billericay (Mr. Proctor) quite rightly drew attention to the amount of money that is spent by local authorities. Local authority revenue spending is £25 billion per annum. All hon. Members are aware that local government spends 11 per cent. of the gross domestic product of this country. That is one quarter of all public expenditure. It is a great deal of money and it is not merely Labour authorities but also Conservative authorities which are spending and growing in real terms, day by day and year by year. We must take that into account. It is well and good that many Conservative-controlled authorities have organised and run expenditure effectively and efficiently. They serve the local people without trying to increase rates by huge sums year on year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) made an excellent speech, setting out clearly some of the iniquities of the council by which his constituency has the misfortune to be run. *[Interruption.]* His authority is extraordinary. It spends money as though it has gone out of fashion. My hon. Friend explained how the public relations unit seeks to discover the public's views on education.

Mr. Straw: The Minister said that Basildon council spends money as though it has gone out of fashion. Since Basildon's increase in spending of 121 per cent. is four percentage points below central Government's increase in spending, would she say that the Prime Minister is spending money as though it has gone out of fashion?

Mrs. Rumbold: It depends entirely from where one starts. The public relations unit is taking soundings about the provision of education services, which is not the responsibility of a district authority. That was my hon. Friend's point. Moreover, the council has founded an interesting unit called BEDCO which plans to borrow £15 million for worthy and, no doubt, useful projects. The future ratepayers of Basildon will have to pay for that, and we should not forget that for one moment. It sounded to me as though the public relations unit intended to take over the duties of the Boundary Commission by tinkering with its recommendations. All in all, my hon. Friend has every cause to support the actions taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

I was a councillor and regarded it as a great privilege to serve as a member of the royal borough of Kingston upon Thames council. I also regarded it as a great duty to take care how I spent other people's money. I am aware of the need to maintain services and to ensure that they are efficient and well balanced, but that should not be at the expense either of businesses and commerce, which provide 60 per cent. of the revenue raised at local level, or of domestic ratepayers.

The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) spoke about jobs in local government. It is important to consider the provision of jobs through local government expenditure and how it raises rates. By raising rates, jobs in the private sector are diminished, and by increasing public sector employment, one does not necessarily improve the quality of life within a local authority.

Mr. John Fraser *rose——*

Mrs. Rumbold: I wish to develop my argument, and the hon. Gentleman may be interested in my comments.

One does not do the best for one's constituents by creating jobs in the public sector. Lambeth, for example, was curious in the way in which it created some jobs. Not so long ago, Lambeth had a poet.

Mr. Fraser: A poet?

Mrs. Rumbold: Indeed, Lambeth had a poet.

Mr. Fraser: The Queen has a poet.

Mrs. Rumbold: With great respect, the Queen's poet is free. I am in favour of poetry. Indeed, the longer I stay in the House, the more I realise that one must read well-written poems from time to time as light relief. I would prefer people to write spontaneous poetry rather than be employed by the likes of Messrs. Knight and company on Lambeth council, eulogising their activities.

Mr. Fraser: Will the hon. Lady give the House one example of how rate capping makes a council more efficient?

Mrs. Rumbold: Rate-capped local authorities have much better balances. Because the rates are limited, such councils will attract more grant, which enables most of them to spend efficiently and give their people the benefit of good services. It is a great pity that Opposition members ask questions and then flatly refuse to listen to the answers.

We have heard about the iniquities of rate capping. We have heard how it is unnecessary and unfair and prevents local authorities from serving people. We have heard how it prevents them from carrying out their mandates. The hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) talked a great deal, and with some affection, about local government. I am glad to hear that he has affection for local government. He said that the rate-capped authorities are together responsible for the expenditure of £1,103·5 million. That almost makes the point that they are very high-spending authorities.

If there is ever a Labour Government, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be as sanguine about the relationship between that Government and local government. I am sure that he is ready to confess that the Government have a responsibility for the overall economy.

Dr. Cunningham: Perhaps the Under-Secretary of State will now explain how the total budgets of rate-capped authorities can show whether they are high or low spenders. The figure that I gave was the total of their budgets. Any conclusion that she can draw from that figure about whether they are high or low spenders would be interesting for the House. *[Interruption.]* Perhaps she will listen to me rather than to the Secretary of State, who is shouting in her ear. My point, which she is singularly refusing to answer, is that the House has no knowledge of the nature, detail, composition or necessity of those expenditures in those budgets.

Mrs. Rumbold: The criteria for rate-capping authorities is that they should be expending 20 per cent over their grant-related expenditure. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) laid

that down last year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has also laid down the criteria for ratecapping. It is most interesting that the hon. Member for Copeland said that, if ever there were a Labour Government, God forbid, he would abolish the Rates Act 1984. If he is prepared to abolish that Act, I wonder how long a Labour Government would allow local authority expenditure to increase.

In 1975, when I was a councillor, Tony Crosland announced to the world of local government that the party was over and that spending had to come to an end. I remember because I took note of what he said, as did many Conservative-controlled authorities. We started to curb our expenditure. It is a great pity that that did not happen later. I should be interested to know whether the Labour party would be inclined to take serious measures against Labour-controlled authorities were they disposed—I am sure that they would not be — to disobey a Labour Government.

Mr. Powley: Does my hon. Friend accept that when we had the restrictions on local government expenditure in the years she refers to, when she was a local authority councillor and I shared a similar position with my local authority, Conservative-controlled councils — we had a Labour Government—willingly accepted the economic restraints that we had to accept because that is what Conservatives do? We co-operated with the economic expenditure restriction that had to be imposed by a Labour Government, whereas now that we as a Government accept economic restrictions because of the circumstances, Labour-controlled authorities actively seek to thwart the intentions of the Government.

Mrs. Rumbold: That is exactly what happened. In fact, there were considerable rate penalties on Conservative authorities which tried to behave properly.

The matter of how interim rates have been set has been raised. Islington has told us that the way we are doing it is illegal and that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State should at least set an interim rate. He has always had that in mind and he has had meetings with eight of the authorities which sought such meetings in order that that could take place. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) that we would certainly have been interested to meet Thamesdown had it made such an application, but, alas, it did not. It is known to the House that Newcastle has also agreed its limits following representations.

Mr. Wareing *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: The two remaining authorities made no such constructive representation. I shall come to Liverpool in a moment and I hope that I shall be able to deal with some of the points that the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) wishes to raise.

The matter of voluntary organisations and the voluntary sector has also been raised. I think that it is important to say a few words about that. One does not want voluntary organisations to be considered in any sense outsdie the consideration by local authorities for careful spending. Certainly the Government do not want to interfere in the local decision-making, in spite of what some Labour Members have said about the Government trying to set rates for local government. That is nonsense, and has nothing to do with rate limitation.

Every authority has the right to determine how and what its priorities are, and that also applies to voluntary organisations. The Government are most anxious that the extremely valuable contributions made by voluntary organisations should continue and I hope that local government will, when it is considering its budget across the board, look at the voluntary organisations and the grants that they are given with the intention of trying to help to maintain their services. It is well known throughout the country that voluntary organisations provide an extremely efficient and effective service.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall give way when I have finished this section.

At present we are providing 75 per cent. of the transitional funding which is up to £12 million in addition to what the boroughs are spending within London. That amount, together with what is already being provided by London, makes £27 million under the Richmond scheme. I trust that that money will be sufficient to cover the voluntary organisations for which I hold as much regard as the Opposition Members who have spoken about that. I believe that that can be sustained.

It is noticeable that the amount of money which had ben spent by the Greater London council and the previous metropolitan county councils has been considerably increased during the past years. That means that there has been a great advance in the number of organisations.

Mr. Wareing: The hon. Lady has been talking about the need for local authorities to assist voluntary organisations. From where will Liverpool get the money to fund voluntary organisations? It is being rate-capped and its expenditure level is only 5·1 per cent. above GRE, yet the norm is 20 per cent.

Mrs. Rumbold: Liverpool's expenditure level has been increased by almost £10 million. Liverpool city council was selected for rate limitation on the basis of the best information available to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he took his decision. That information was the budget which the council agreed on 14 June. We all know what nonsense that budget was. Had the council agreed on a different budget before my right hon. Friend took his decision on selection he would have had to take that into account. We cannot rewrite history.

Mr. Wareing: Liverpool did.

Mrs. Rumbold: It is impossible to take the step of totally rewriting history, even in the light of the hon. Gentleman's claims. I regret it, but that is the position.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided, after studying representations from all the authorities and looking at all the factors, that there was no outstanding issue that warranted delay. It seems to us that a rate should be set for all authorities and that interim limits would do no more than provide unsatisfactory bases for the budget decisions by these councils.

it has been suggested that my right hon. Friend should have looked favourably on interim limits simply because of the uncertainty that abolition would bring to many London boroughs. It is equally true to say that interim limits would cause uncertainty and confusion. I think that one should leave the matter at that point.

Much play has been made of the issue of abolition for the GLC and for London boroughs, such as the eight which have been affected by the order. The matters which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey raised about

[Mrs. Rumbold]

the councillors who are facing court cases brought by the auditor are not for the House because the auditor is an independent authority and further action will depend on the outcome of the cases.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government told my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) that the issue arising in councils other than those affected by the court cases mean that figures on the losses incurred must be required for the electorate and the public at large before May. I hope that the hon. Lady will bring her good offices to bear in obtaining that information as soon as possible. We should be happy to co-operate in any way.

Mrs. Rumbold: I thank the hon. Gentleman. That is very helpful.

With all authorities, it is now possible to make accurate estimates of any additional costs, especially in London where the residuary body announced earlier today its levy and charges for the coming year. I believe that this will considerably reduce the burden on many of the councils which, when I saw them recently, were expecting and counting on higher charges.

In addition, there will be an extra advantage to London boroughs from the GLC's balances which will be distributed to rate-capped authorities just as much as to others. That particular bogy needs to be laid to rest immediately. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has always said that abolition will have a neutral effect. It is clear from the figures that that is more than borne out by the facts. The Opposition fail to acknowledge that, within the grants system, these problems have been readily understood and incorporated. Islington and Hackney have grant-related expenditure per head of population of £571 and £556 respectively compared with GRE in Kingston and Bexley of £211 and £178 respectively. There is considerable evidence that the councils chosen for rate capping have been more than adequately selected.

Most hon. Members have understood perfectly that the local government elections, about which the Opposition talk so much as providing a mandate, are a little bit of a sham because the percentage of the voters taking up the opportunity to vote is low. They know that many people have no idea of what the council is doing. They have no reason to question, because they do not pay. They vote for the tissue of lies that the councils put around. How many people live in squalor because the councils do not carry out their obligations to tenants to repair and maintain and to sell houses when the tenants ask for that right? Howmany of those councils get votes by refusing to collect rents? How many councils fail to collect rent arrears, which are an absolute disgrace? There are £57 million-worth of rent arrears. The only exception among rate-capped authorities is Greenwich.

No one should try to tell me that those authorities have no money and cannot fulfil their obligations to the people in their areas. They choose to manage badly. The people in their authorities suffer as a result. For the sake of the ratepayers and innocent voters in those rate-capped authorities, I commend the order to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 208.

Division No. 85] **[10 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Fairbairn, Nicholas
Amess, David	Fallon, Michael
Ancram, Michael	Farr, Sir John
Arnold, Tom	Favell, Anthony
Ashby, David	Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Aspinwall, Jack	Fletcher, Alexander
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Fookes, Miss Janet
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Forman, Nigel
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Forth, Eric
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Baldry, Tony	Fox, Marcus
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Franks, Cecil
Batiste, Spencer	Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Freeman, Roger
Bellingham, Henry	Fry, Peter
Bendall, Vivian	Gale, Roger
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic	Galley, Roy
Best, Keith	Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Bevan, David Gilroy	Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Garel-Jones, Tristan
Blackburn, John	Glyn, Dr Alan
Body, Sir Richard	Goodlad, Alastair
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Gow, Ian
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Gower, Sir Raymond
Bottomley, Peter	Grant, Sir Anthony
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Greenway, Harry
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Gregory, Conal
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Boyson, Dr Rhodes	Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard	Grist, Ian
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Ground, Patrick
Bright, Graham	Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Brinton, Tim	Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Hampson, Dr Keith
Brooke, Hon Peter	Hanley, Jeremy
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Hannam, John
Browne, John	Hargreaves, Kenneth
Bruinvels, Peter	Harris, David
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Haselhurst, Alan
Buck, Sir Antony	Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Budgen, Nick	Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Bulmer, Esmond	Hawksley, Warren
Burt, Alistair	Hayes, J.
Butcher, John	Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam	Hayward, Robert
Butterfill, John	Heddle, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Henderson, Barry
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*	Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Hickmet, Richard
Carttiss, Michael	Hicks, Robert
Cash, William	Hill, James
Chalker, Mrs Lynda	Hind, Kenneth
Channon, Rt Hon Paul	Hirst, Michael
Chapman, Sydney	Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Chope, Christopher	Hordern, Sir Peter
Churchill, W. S.	Howard, Michael
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*	Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*	Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*	Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Colvin, Michael	Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Coombs, Simon	Hunter, Andrew
Cope, John	Irving, Charles
Couchman, James	Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Cranborne, Viscount	Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Crouch, David	Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina	Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Dickens, Geoffrey	Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Dorrell, Stephen	Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.	Key, Robert
Dover, Den	King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Dunn, Robert	King, Rt Hon Tom
Dykes, Hugh	Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*	Knowles, Michael
Eggar, Tim	Knox, David
Emery, Sir Peter	Lamont, Norman
Evennett, David	Lang, Ian
Eyre, Sir Reginald	Lawler, Geoffrey

Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stokes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tony Durant and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carter-Jones, Lewis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(S'heath)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Loyden, Edward
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Dr M. S. *(E Kilbride)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David

Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Allen Adams.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Rate Limitation (Prescribed Maximum) (Rates) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 13th February, be approved.

Local Government Reorganisation (Pensions)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Local Government Reorganisation (Designated Councils) (Pensions) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 96), dated 23rd January 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 27th January, be annulled.

Mr. Roland Boyes (Houghton and Washington): This is a simple order. It transfers to the designated councils the responsibility for certain pension and compensatory matters relating to the Tyne and Wear, West Midlands, and West Yorkshire county councils which, regrettably, are to be abolished on 1 April 1986. This can be done under the provisions of section 60 of the Local Government Act 1985 which states that on 1 April 1986 the superannuation function of each metropolitan county council becomes the function of the appropriate residuary body. Section 66 of the Act, however, allows the district councils to agree that, instead of the residuary body, one district in each area should discharge this function.

The Opposition do not intend to oppose this order. However, we have deliberately brought it on to the Floor of the House because there are certain questions that we wish to put, even at this late stage, to the Minister. The metropolitan counties require answers from him before they take certain actions.

Only five weeks are left before abolition. This is an important order, and more of them are to come. In evidence to the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments on 22 January 1986 the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment said:

"There will be further orders. Others will be brought forward as quickly as the Department can deal with drafting, consultation and other preparation."

I am reliably informed that at least seven orders dealing with matters relating to the Greater London Council will have to be introduced in the few weeks that are left before abolition. I refer, for example, to the Thames Barrier and Flood Protection Act 1972 (Amendment) Order and also to an order dealing with the designation of individuals or groups of staff for transfer. Some quite important Orders have yet to be brought to the House.

At the conclusion of the Third Reading on the Bill to abolish the GLC and the six metropolitan counties, the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said:

"I must say that the Bill has been an extremely unhappy experience for many Conservative Members. It has been a dialogue of the deaf, and a case of the bland leading the blind." —[*Official Report*, 28 March 1985; Vol. 76, c. 750.]

That was a stunning indictment of the contents of the Bill and the way in which the hon. Member's own Front Bench had in a cavalier and unconcerned way treatedthe arguments of hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is because of that attitude that we are now in the ludicrous position of discussing an order affecting a large number of people who work or previously worked for three of the metropolitan councils. We are only five weeks away from 31 March, the date for the final abolition of the GLC and the six metropolitan counties.

I am sure that members of local government throughout the land will take note of the way in which this Government value their work. During the long hours in Committee — something like 200 hours — my hon. Friends and I continually, but regrettably unsuccessfully, demanded answers to questions about the cost and staffing implications of abolition. We made it clear that each of the clauses in the Bill needed careful examination to avoid problems that would arise up to the abolition date. We argued that the badly drafted Bill needed a large amount of time in Committee to examine and explore the implications for the public and the staff. The Government, quite wrongly and vindictively, refused to allow the time needed. Instead of heeding our many warnings, the Government introduced a timetable motion. It was wrong then and it has proved wrong every time we have to consider an order like the one before us tonight.

During the debate on the timetable motion on 11 February 1985, my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) said:

"First, the few Conservative Members who spoke seemed more concerned with the contents of the Strangers Gallery than with the contents of the Bill. We then had a series of repetitious speeches complaining about repetition in Committee, but, as the Leader of the House made clear, there was no repetition in Committee and no attempts to filibuster."

The then Minister for Local Government, now promoted to the post of Secretary of State for the Environment and, incidentally, carrying on where his predecessor left off, confirmed what my hon. Friend said when he said:

"I readily agree that the Bill has not been delayed as a result of filibustering upstairs." — [*Official Report*, 11 February 1985; Vol. 73, c. 112-4.]

I can only conclude from what has happened since that we in the Opposition were perfectly correct in asking for adequate time to consider the problems that would arise. Only a month or so ago the Local Government Reorganisation (Transitional Provisions) Order 1985, was debated in Committee. Such was the strength of feeling against the Government that the Committee divided 7:7 and the order was carried only on the casting vote of the Conservative Chairman.

In spite of the many problems inherent in the Bill, what have the metropolitan counties done and why? Some have reached no agreement at all about superannuation and its administration. Some have an agreement, but not the one that they wanted. I will explain that fully in a moment. Three of them have opted for a named district council rather than a residuary body, although, as I shall illustrate later, that was not necessarily the first choice of those councils.

Why have three of the metropolitan counties opted for a district council even though that was not necessarily their first choice? In an article in the *Local Government Chronicle* on 10 January, 1986 entitled "Co-operation in Re-allocation", Mr. Robert Hedley wrote about the Tyne and Wear metropolitan county council of which my constituency is a constituent part:

"the five district leaders quickly agreed their underlying philosophy: the Government appointed residuary body would have as little as possible to do other than close the accounts and perhaps dispose of property."

In another article in the same journal, Angela Holden wrote on 31 January 1986 about the approach to abolition in the west midlands. She wrote:

"A fundamental principle, agreed immediately, was to keep as many functions in district hands as possible and lead authorities were established to re-organise the met county services."

The three metropolitan county councils which reached agreements with the district duly named the lead authorities to deal with, among other functions, the

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superannuation matters of the staff. That I applaud. It leaves the issue in the hands of directly elected representatives rather than in the hands of a body that is selected and directly accountable to the Secretary of State for the Environment which has only a limited life.

Section 67 of the Local Government Act 1985 refers to residuary bodies. It states:

"Except as respects any of its functions for the discharge of which provision will be or is likely to be required after the end of the period of five years beginning with the abolition date, it shall be the duty of each residuary body to use its best endeavours to secure that its work is completed as soon as practicable and in any event by the end of that period."

It is clear that it was in the interests of the employees and former employees of the metropolitan county councils and of the public in general that the administration of their pensions and increases in pension rights should be in the hands of directly elected local government representatives. It is clear that the fund will have to be passed from the residuary body to another body on some other occasion in view of its short life. The sooner that it is passed to a successor authority the better, for that will eliminate uncertainty for all.

With only five weeks to abolition, it is disgraceful that some members of staff do not know whether they will be working for a residuary body or a district council. Indeed, they do not know whether they will face the ultimate humiliation of the dole queue after many years of service with a metropolitan county council. I regret that that is the fate of some of those who work in the pensions departments of the metropolitan county councils. Unfortunately, it is the destiny of thousands of those who are currently metropolitan county council and GLC employees.

I pose two questions that I consider to be critical for those who are currently employed by the metropolitan county councils and for those who will be administering the bodies that succeed them. First, is there any way of unscrambling the arrangements that are set out in the order so that joint committee-lead authority arrangements can obtain in Tyne and Wear, the west midlands and west Yorkshire eventually? I ask the question because the Tyne and Wear authority has a scheme whereby south Tyneside will have administrative responsibilities. The Tyne and Wear authority would have preferred something quite different. It would have favoured a voluntary joint committee with a lead authority providing administration and management.

The legal advice that was given to the officers of the Tyne and Wear authority—similar advice was given to other authorities—was that this was not possible under the 1985 Act. The function has to pass to the residuary body or to one district alone, albeit with a consultative committee. Therefore, the Tyne and Wear authority could not have its first choice, and it ended up with what it considered to be the best of the two options that remained. It is important that the county council and those who will be concerned with its functions after abolition should know whether it will be possible at some future date, especially after the function of the residuary body has come to an end, to proceed to the status that it first wished to obtain.

There was no problem in west Yorkshire about the superannuation function going to Bradford, as that was generally agreed among the five districts, with the addition of an advisory body. In the west Midlands, the authorities, although happy with the present arrangement, had earlier discussed the possibility of a joint authority-lead district.

My second question revolves around the fact that three metropolitan county council areas are not included in tonight's consideration. For those areas, will the Government lay the necessary orders quickly to transfer the superannuation function from the residuary bodies to joint committees? Can that be done at the request of only a majority of districts in an area? I ask that, because unanimity is required on some issues.

Greater Manchester prefers a joint authority-lead area district. South Yorkshire is not included in the instrument, and the authorities there want the functiion to go to a joint authority-lead district and not to remain with only one authority. Merseyside can see no prospect of agreement, and in the earlier debate my hon. Friend the Member for Copeland illustrated the problem in Merseyside in getting agreement, the districts being split three to two on all but one, rather ludicrous, issue.

Three metropolitan county councils will most likely end up with the residuary body, after which the residuary body will disappear, and then arrangements will have to be made to enable the superannuation arrangements to be administered. Other bodies, meanwhile, have reached agreement and wish to make alternative arrangements.

As I said at the outset, we shall not divide the House on this issue. It is essential that we explore these matters because they are vital to those who live in the areas that hon. Members have mentioned. I hope that the Minister will deal with the two important questions that I posed towards the end of my remarks.

10.33 pm

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I have a question for the Minister, and in a way I hope that she will not answer it tonight. I say that because it would probably not be the answer I want, as the matter requires much thought, now that the abolition of counties is upon us.

When I asked the question previously I received what I would describe as a negative answer. While that answer may have been factually correct, I regarded it as morally wrong. The difficulty to which I refer can be put right when future instruments appear, especially that for south Yorkshire.

In the payment of redundancy, compensation or severance, a vast difference can occur among people in the same grades doing the same jobs, simply because of the date set for the cut-off point. I hope that the Minister will consider this matter carefully because many people who come within tonight's instrument will be treated differently from those who will come within future provisions.

People can receive, say £20,000 compensation in one instance, yet because arrangements over and above the statutory minimum for compensation were not made in other instances, people—for example, this will apply in south Yorkshire—may receive only £9,000. I accept that the whole issue is complicated and needs great thought. I hope the Minister will ensure that people are treated equally.

10.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): I should like to

attempt to help the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) and then to deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. McKay).

I was little surprised, at the start of this short debate, that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington suggested that the time allocated for discussion of the Local Government Act 1985 was inadequate, because he admitted that at least 200 hours of Committee time was spent on that measure. In fact, the parliamentary time allocated for that Bill was significantly more than that allocated either to the London Government Act 1963—which reorganised the whole structure of London government, creating the Greater London council, the Inner London education authority and the 32 London boroughs—and longer than the time given to the Local Government Act 1972, which restructured the whole of local government in the rest of England and Wales.

Throughout the discussion of the Local Government Bill, the Opposition have consistently refused to use the time to discuss the detailed provisions of the Bill, which I should like to discuss now in respect of the order. The Opposition continually repeated the same debate on the principle of abolition and they have little to complain about in terms of the time spent discussing the many issues involved in the Local Government Bill.

In the White Paper, in October 1983, setting out the Government's proposals for reorganising local government in Greater London and the metropolitan counties, we explained our attitude to the administration of the local government superannuation funds.

The Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils are administering authorities under the local government superannuation scheme. In the case of the metropolitan county councils, they also act as administering authorities in relation to the district councils in their area.

In the White Paper, we rejected the idea of making each district council in the metropolitan counties an administering authority for its own employees and pensioners. That would have meant splitting the existing funds, plus a large increase in the number of administering authorities. We felt that there were strong arguments on grounds of efficiency for not breaking up the funds, and for transferring the responsibility to a single body in each metropolitan county.

We took the view that, in the metropolitan counties, it should be possible for one of the district councils within a metropolitan county to take on the responsibility. In London, where the London borough councils are already the administering authorities under the local government superannuation scheme, responsibilities in relation to existing GLC pensioners could not be distributed to the boroughs. We proposed in this case that these responsibilities should go to the London Residuary Body.

In a document on abolition published in July 1984, we confirmed our intention to give the superannuation function in London to the Residuary Body. For the metropolitan counties, we said that we would still prefer the function to be taken on by one of the metropolitan district councils where the districts can reach agreement between themselves on such an arrangement. But to make sure that there would be adequate arrangements in case the districts could not reach agreement, we decided to draft the legislation in such a way that the task could be taken on by a district council or by a residuary body.

Accordingly, section 60 of the Local Government Act 1985 provides that the local government superannuation function shall pass to the appropriate residuary body on 1 April 1986. But section 66 allows my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, in the case of the metropolitan counties, to make an order designating a district council to assume that function instead. An order designating a district council can be made only where all the district councils within a metropolitan county agree.

Agreement on the designation of a district council has been reached in three of the six metropolitan counties. They are West Midlands, West Yorkshire and Tyne and Wear. In the three counties in which agreement has been reached among the district councils, the districts chosen to exercise the superannuation function were Wolverhampton, Bradford and South Tyneside. Applications for designation were made by those three councils and they explained how they proposed to exercise the function. The designation order which we are debating tonight provides for the local government superannuation function to go to those districts on 1 April.

The order makes provision for the way in which costs incurred by the designated councils in exercising the functions are to be borne. Costs which cannot be met from the superannuation funds will include pensions increase payments and existing county council liabilities for compensation for their former staff.

In so far as those costs are not otherwise chargeable to another authority, they will be split among all the district councils within the county. The basis of the apportionment included in the order is that agreed by all the districts concerned. In the case of Bradford and south Tyneside, it is on the number of pensionable employees of the districts within the local government superannuation scheme. For Wolverhampton, it is on a population basis in the same way that the costs of the residuary bodies will be apportioned. That was entirely a matter of choice.

The way in which those designated councils arrange to discharge that function must be for them to decide. Each of the councils is arranging for participation of the other districts within the county on the appropriate committee or investment panel which will be established. Each council is also naturally concerned to retain appropriate expertise of the county council's superannuation staff.

Our general policy on staffing in the abolition exercise has been that it is for the successor authority to decide whether to ask for staff to be transferred to it by order. In the event, the effect of a staff transfer order is that the staff concerned retain their existing terms and conditions. At the request of Wolverhampton and south Tyneside, most superannuation staff of the West Midlands and Tyne and Wear county councils are included in a staff transfer order which has been laid before the House. Bradford decided to recruit county staff and has sent letters offering posts to those involved. The county staff will be recruited on their existing salary, but they will have the same conditions of service as the Bradford council staff.

Those arrangements are bound to vary in the light of local circumstances, but I know that the districts are taking steps to smooth the transition. Bradford and Wolverhampton are, for example, arranging for superannuation work to remain at the county halls for the time being.

On the first question that the hon. Member for Houghton and Washington asked, there is no provision for the function to go to another body where it is given to a

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designated district council. District councils have been designated because all the districts in the county are agreed.

Where the district councils within a metropolitan county agree on one of their number having the superannuation function at abolition, the Government believe that it is right to provide for that, so we have provided in this designation order for Bradford, South Tyneside and Wolverhampton to assume the superannuation function on 1 April.

I should like to answer the hon. Gentleman's second question. I have already explained the Government's view that the superannuation function of the metropolitan counties should be exercised by a single district. We do not favour the setting up of a joint committee which would, in effect, be a joint board. There are no powers in the Superannuation Act 1972 or in the Local Government Act 1985 to enable the superannuation function to be given to a joint committee of the districts on the abolition of the metropolitan county councils. At abolition, the alternatives are for the function to go to a designated district council or to the appropriate residuary body.

There is plainly a good deal for the designated districts to do to ensure that they can effectively take over the function. The continuing payment of pensions is clearly of the utmost importance. I have no reason to think that the plans of the district councils are not proceeding satisfactorily. I hope that the House agrees that that is the case.

I have taken note of the point that the hon. Member made, and if he will allow it, I shall write to him on that matter in due course. I ask the House to approve the order.

Question put and negatived.

Systime plc

10.44 pm

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): I am grateful to have the opportunity to raise the matter of Systime plc of Leeds. I wish to set out at the beginning of my speech what I believe that the Government and the Minister should do. This will be the framework of the story of Systime plc and the Government's role in that story.

I believe there should be an urgent inquiry, perhaps under section 6 of the Fair Trading Act 1973 or any other appropriate statute, into the key issue of whether Digital Equipment Corporation, known as DEC, the United States Department of Commerce, officials of the Department of Trade and Industry and Her Majesty's Customs and Excise behaved legitimately in their dealings with Systime plc. The Government must act to make effective the express views of the Attorney-General on extra territoriality abuses by such companies as DEC. Urgent action is also required to enforce articles 30 and 86 of the Treaty of Rome, which refer to the dominant position being abused by a company and of trade restrictions being permissible only if they are approved by the EC countries. These articles are clearly relevant to the Systime case. The law relating to patent and copyright requires urgent review to see whether vexatious legal action which significantly harms the continued viability of a smaller company can be inhibited.

Since I first embarked on this case, I have been overwhelmed with evidence. Indeed, the question has been what to leave out rather what to put in. I have also met briefly with representatives of DEC through the good offices of the hon. Member for Surrey, North-West (Mr. Grylls), who numbers DEC amongst his financial interests. The case that I put before the House has been assembled painstakingly from numerous sources and pieces of evidence. Within the time constraints of an Adjournment debate I cannot hope to cover every issue. Therefore, I will not deal with the vexed question of the use of legal action on alleged patent or copyright infringements to stop rivals trading. If this legal action is dragged out, it effectively put smaller competitors out of business. I will not deal in detail with the Co-ordinating Committee for Export to Communist Areas issue and the intricate problem of technology and the Eastern bloc countries—both issues are relevant.

I emphasise that I am in no way motivated by any anti-American spirit. In that respect I am at least at one with the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) and the speech that he made at the weekend. There is a sense in which, in the longer term, what I am arguing for will help the United States and its broader role in the world. I am not motivated by any wish to score party debating points — if the circumstances had been different, the material could have ended up in any hon. Member's hands.

I am anxious to protect what jobs remain at Systime plc and I would urge the Government to use every means possible to assist the company's future. I do not wish to pretend that one side is all pure and the other entirely evil. Systime plc has its faults. The computer business is not for the faint hearts and no doubt there is some sharp practice in virtually every major deal. The regular movement of skilled managers and entrepreneurs between companies

makes the control of legitimate business confidentiality impossible. My case is simply that the odds are stacked against United Kingdom industry when it is under threat from the United States. The Government alone have the power to even up the balance and defend British industry.

I bring before the House the grave matter of Systime plc, at one time this country's second largest computer maker. That company, based in Leeds and drawing staff from all constituencies of Leeds, has reduced its payroll from 1,200 in 1984 to about 400 today. Those 400 jobs and the fate of a major high technology manufacturer and exporter are now in jeopardy. I have a series of sworn affidavits, letters from the American Embassy in London, and other documents which show that Systime's plight is mainly due to the illegal, improper and indecisive activities of three parties. Those parties are Digital Equipment Corporation — Systime's major American supplier and competitor — a number of American Government officials — some based at the London Embassy whom I shall name—and a number of officials and Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry.

The matter of Systime plc is not, as the Westland affair was, a matter of disclosure but rather a matter of law. Laws have been broken on a significant scale and frequently by those charged with upholding the law. It is not solely a commercial matter but rather of a question of legality. It involves a sustained breach of United Kingdom sovereignty, condoned by the Government—if only by default — and used as a weapon to destroy Systime. Within six years we have witnessed the destruction of a company.

I will describe Systime and its rival and supplier, DEC. Systime plc was an entrepreneurial company founded in Leeds by Mr. John Gow and others in the mid-seventies. Its major business developed around retailing of equipment purchased mainly from Digital Equipment Corporation, with additional parts and software. DEC, as Digital is known, is the second largest computer company in the world, based near Boston, Massachusetts. It built up its huge sales mainly by wholesaling equipment to companies, such as Systime, which then sold the equipment to end users.

In 1979, Systime's management discovered that it was about 25 per cent. cheaper to buy equipment direct from DEC in the United States than from DEC's subsidiary in the United Kingdom. DEC UK objected to the loss of profit that that implied, and persuaded DEC US to insist that equipment could be bought only from the subsidiary. Subsequently, when DEC US tried to break its contract with the Systime subsidiary in the United States, Systime's management commenced an anti-trust action in which the British Government took an amicus curiae position. DEC drew back and agreed to a partial continuation of supply. Systime appeared to have won a breathing space, but it was only temporary. That is apparently the only time that the British Government have openly defended Systime, and, significantly, the only time that DEC has drawn back.

In 1979, DEC UK, under its American manager, Mr. Darryl Barbé launched a formal campaign known as the "Kill Systime" campaign. He had the full support of the American management. The DEC president, Mr. Ken Olsen, was subsequently overheard leaving a board-level meeting with another company, declaring that he wished to see Systime out of business. Mr. Pier-Carlo Falotti, European vice-president of DEC, said to DEC staff:

"I want you guys to go out and kill Systime."

DEC's most senior vice-president, Mr. Jack Shields, was regularly in the United Kingdom, supervising the events that I shall set out. Between 1980 and 1983, Systime grew rapidly, making sales to the British and United States Governments, and commencing the manufacture of ruggadised computers for the Ministry of Defence. Exports also grew to the benefit of the United Kingdom.

The British Technology Group, the Government's investment arm, and others invested heavily in Systime. By the end of 1982 the need for new cash to support the now rapid growth of the company became urgent. That was well known to DEC, which took unique and wholly improper advantage to destroy Systime.

Besides the openly declared "Kill Systime" campaign, there was a secret investigation conducted on DEC's behalf by a private detective agency, Network Security Services. I was told by one ex-DEC employee that Network Security Services "have contacts everywhere."

Recalling that we are dealing with a publicly funded company, I come next to a meeting between Systime, its bankers, Kleinwort, Benson, and representatives of the Government, including the Department of Trade and Industry and others, which took place on 19 January 1983 at Kleinwort, Benson's premises in London. Prior to the meeting, DEC's legal representative, Mr. Harry Small, of the solicitors, Linklaters and Paines, made, among others, the following allegations based on a report from Network Security Services. First, that Systime was illegally pirating DEC software on a large scale. Secondly, that Systime had exported no fewer than 400 DEC computers to the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc disguised as juke boxes. Thirdly, that Systime was involved in a series of other breaches of United States export regulations. Present at the meeting were all the Systime directors, Mr. Geoffrey Sterling, representing 10 Downing street and the Department of Trade and Industry, Mr. Stuart Bloc, representing the NEB and British Technology Group, and Mr. Bill Wigglesworth for the Department of Trade and Industry.

The DEC representatives made it plain that they intended to inform the United States Government of those matters. The implication was clear to intending investors and purchasers. The flotation effort failed, and a would-be takeover by STC failed which, no doubt, DEC intended should happen to any attempt to keep Systime going.

John Gow was concerned that there may have been some minor infringements, and so DEC was subsequently allowed to audit Systime's books, at Systime's invitation and expense. It was unable to produce any evidence for its more extravagant claims, and only a minor under-accounting for the key one. But Systime was doomed, though not adequately from DEC's point of view. The "Kill Systime" campaign continued.

Between 1983 and July 1984, DEC obtained Systime's crucial customer list, and it is alleged that Systime's offices in Washington DC were broken into or that staff were bribed. In Leeds, Systime's own shipping files were apparently raided and documents removed. Those two sets of documents, together with the report used in the 19 January 1983 meeting, were given to the United States department of commerce in Washington, which began an investigation of Systime. The Prime Minister wrote concerning the missing Leeds documents to my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown). She said that British Customs

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"were not aware of any documents which would be of assistance to them being removed from other companies by US Customs". Note the use of the word "other". The Prime Minister refused to exonerate United States Customs from having illegally acquired documents. I assume that she refused to do so because she had good reason to believe that it was indeed United States Customs, or its agents, which raided Systime for the missing documents.

In July 1984, on advice from the United States Government, the United Kingdom Government instructed United Kingdom Customs to raid Systime in Leeds. It was United Kingdom Customs which discovered that the key shipping documents were not there. It took a little longer to discover that the key documents were in the United States being used as evidence against Systime by the Department of Commerce.

There were two American officials in the United Kingdom working with diplomatic status at the embassy who, according to letters in my possession, were involved in the case against Systime. The first is Mr. Jack Lacey, the head of a Customs team at the United States embassy, responsible for the de facto direction and supervision of the United Kingdom's own campaign against the export of high technology. The second was Mr. Timothy Deal, who was directly involved in the subsequent blacklisting of Mr. John Gow, the founder of Systime. Those two officials were, I believe, involved with DEC in the Systime case.

Based on DEC's report on the various illegally obtained documents, the United States Government found Systime guilty of violations of United States export laws. Systime was found guilty of exporting computer equipment from the United Kingdom to Pakistan, Iraq, South Africa and other destinations, without the permission of the American Government. Amazingly, it is now, and has been for some considerable time, an offence to ship high technology goods from the United Kingdom without United States Government export licences.

Systime was fined $400,000 and has had its domestic and export sales put under the direct control of the United States Department of Commerce. More important, and having a direct bearing on its fate, the company found it almost impossible to obtain supplies of equipment from any American supplier. It began to fall behind on orders. In the last eight weeks alone Systime, having waited months, has been refused United States Government permission to supply a multi-million pound computer order to West Germany from the United Kingdom.

In furtherance of this effort to eliminate Systime, DEC's private detectives have followed Systime personnel and placed their homes under surveillance. There are allegations in my possession of phone tapping, of break-ins, and of pressure which directly or indirectly led, alas, to at least one suicide. Certainly, it would appear that Systime engineers have been followed to their customers' offices by DEC agents. Subsequently, those sites have been visited by DEC personnel under the guise of wishing to quote for a maintenance contract. The serial numbers of machines were then noted and the original American supplier to Systime was then pressured to discontinue supply.

In the same context, DEC has made use of improperly obtained Systime customer lists to canvass Systime's customers with, in DEC's words, a "rubber order book". What has the United States Commerce Department to say about all this? Mr. Frank Deliberti, the manager of the compliance division of the United States Commerce Department said:

"I am going to shut Systime down. I am going to issue an (export) denial order and shut them down."

In an internal document relating to exports from the United Kingdom, DEC states:

"Digital UK must control the movement of the hardware, software and know-how"—

presumably people—

"in the United Kingdom to ensure that DEC remains within the US and UK laws."

There is no United Kingdom law that requires anyone to control the movement of computers, software or the know-how in people's minds within the United Kingdom, but the fact that DEC can say it is the measure of the position we are now in the United Kingdom, as a result of the Government's failure to act to end the monstrous imposition of United States law on United Kingdom exports and even on United Kingdom citizens—a failure that has doomed Systime and many other less well known United Kingdom companies.

In the case of Systime I allege that, first, the company has been fatally damaged as the result of a sustained campaign, much of it illegal, by DEC, Secondly, that the most damaging facet of that campaign was the move by the United States Government against Systime based on laws that, according to our Attorney-General, are:

"an infringement of United Kingdom jurisdiction and contrary to international law."

Thirdly, based on the Prime Minister's letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil, and correspondence between Systime, the United States embassy and the Department of Trade and Industry, I further allege that the Government had specific knowledge of the illegal removal of documents from Systime in Leeds to the United States, the spurious charges against Systime by DEC's representatives prior to the 19 January 1983 meeting and the fact that those charges were being conveyed to the United States Government, the improper interference in United Kingdom domestic affairs of the two United States embassy officials, Mr. Jack Lacey and Mr. Timothy Deal and the fact that DEC's application against Systime of its internal export rules demonstrates prima facie evidence of multiple breaches of at least two articles of the Treaty of Rome, which the Government are legally bound to uphold — article 86, the abuse of a dominant position, and article 30, which prohibits barriers to trade other than those agreed by the EEC.

In a real sense, the Systime case is virtually closed. DEC has achieved its major objective and now owns Systime's lucrative maintenance contracts and, in a sense, has brought the evidence. The rest of the company, under CDC parentage, will depend on the success or otherwise of its S series computers. I wish it well. Ironically, even that success can be affected by DEC future policy.

The significance of this story is in its lessons. Why depend on a crystal ball for Westland, British Leyland or for other United Kingdom computer companies when the record exists? Virtually 20 years ago, Servan Schreiber wrote in his book "The American Challenge":

"Current disjointed, nearsighted attempts at competition by individual European governments are inexcusable, and doomed to failure. Not only can we succeed, we must succeed. No area of industry can ever be independent if we rely on others for computers, hardware and software. If there is a battle for the future, it is the battle of computing."

Successive Governments have allowed battle after battle to the be lost. Whether the war is lost I know not, but I am sure that the Government must act as if there is still time. What are the Government going to do to protect our future and Europe's future?

11 pm

The Minister for Information Technology (Mr. Geoffrey Pattie): As the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) has said, Systime was founded in Leeds in the early 1970s. A vigorous and entrepreneurial approach to the market for integrated computer solutions brought it early success and rapid growth. By 1981 it had built up a turnover of more than £30 million and was employing some 1,200 people. Continued growth required expansion, so the company embarked on a major development at Millshaw park in Leeds to provide the room and the facilities to accommodate the very ambitious growth targets it had set itself.

Sadly, the completion of this development coincided with the onset of financial difficulties of the kind which can all too easily beset companies set on rapid growth. In short, the company found itself caught in the bind of a serious financial crisis requiring the injection of substantial new funds to keep it afloat. Fortunately, such funds were forthcoming from a number of sources, including Control Data Corporation, which took a substantial minority stake in Systime in 1983. It increased this to over 90 per cent. early in 1985 in the face of continuing financial difficulties, exacerbated by the downturn in the computer market generally. Since that time, CDC has continued to stand by the company while plans were put in place for a restructuring to match Systime's activities more closely to its available resources.

As the hon. Gentleman will know, the broad lines of that restructuring were announced last November. Inevitably, it involves some cutbacks, which I regret as much as anyone else. But I believe that the plan represents a constructive response to the problems of the past few years and I am encouraged that there now appear to be good prospects of Systime continuing as a computer manufacturer in Leeds, with a sound in-house designed and developed product range. The opportunity is there, if all goes according to plan, for Systime to build on its strengths and experience in the market place to become once more a strong and growing force in the United Kingdom computer market.

I would not want to pretend that from this point everything will automatically be plain sailing. There is much work to be done to ensure that the signs of hope for the future which I have just described turn into real results. That will require all the company's energies, and I am sure it is something to which the hon. Gentleman would want to give every support.

In this context, while I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the grave issues which he has brought before the House tonight, I hope that he will agree that it is very much in Systime's interest, and the interests of job prospects in Leeds, that we should not let the events of the past become a preoccupation or a drag on the major task that needs to be done to assure the future for the company. The hon. Gentleman must decide whether he will put the interest of his constituents first in this matter.

I turn now to the substance of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I listened to what he had to say with great care. The hon. Gentleman was kind enough to send me a draft copy of his speech which I very much appreciate. He said at the beginning of his speech that he had been "overwhelmed with evidence". That is precisely what I want to see. The hon. Gentleman has the right to raise any matter that he chooses in the House and I am perfectly happy to respond to it. I ask him whether he believes—he does not want me to put it in the terms of the best interests of his constituents—that in the best interests of the serious matters he has raised we should be considering them in the 29 minutes and 30 seconds that we have tonight. That is his decision.

The hon. Gentleman will agree that we had a brief conversation in which he said that he would wish to see me about this matter. He will recall that I said that I would be happy to see him, as I am. I must say—this is the most fundamental point that I can make on his speech—that I need evidence. The hon. Gentleman has made serious allegations about an American company, DEC, and about various named officials in the United States Government and about officials and Ministers, unnamed, in the British Government.

I should like to deal in the limited time I have available with DEC and the so-called "Kill Systime campaign". Systime is not the first company to have got into financial difficulties in going for rapid expansion.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Pattie: I cannot give way. I am already taking up time in resisting the intervention. I should be delighted to debate with the hon. Gentleman at any time, but I am trying to respond to the points made by the hon. Member for Leeds, West.

The hon. Member for Leeds, West said that the computer market is not for faint hearts. He would hardly need reminding that the commercial world is a hard and competitive one. Companies fight, and fight hard, to survive, and it should hardly be a cause for surprise if they seek to use every legitimate means to hand to promote their commercial interests. This is the hard practical world of commerce, operating quite justifiably within the law.

The hon. Gentleman makes allegations of improper and unlawful activity to drive home a competitive advantage —indeed, to finish off a competitor altogether. If this is true, it is a very serious matter and if the hon. Gentleman has evidence—not allegation, but evidence—that the law has been broken, I hope he will bring it forward so that appropriate action can be taken. However, I have to say that I have yet to see any evidence of unlawful activity by DEC in relation to Systime.

The hon. Gentleman specifically referred to possible breaches of the treaty of Rome. As he will know, this is a highly complex area, which is essentially the province of the European Commission. On receipt of the appropriate evidence, we shall consider it.

I turn to the subject of United States re-export controls. I begin by emphasising that we fully agree with the United States on the need to prevent the leakage of sensitive technology from the West. We fully support the multilateral controls of COCOM as the United States does. We see eye to eye with the United States on the need for such controls.

However, we object to United States controls on exports from third countries of goods including United States components or United States technology. Such

[Mr. Pattie]

controls are extraterritorial, and the United Kingdom emphatically rejects the implied claim of the United States to jurisdiction in the United Kingdom. The Government have made their position crystal clear on this issue on many occasions. The United States is well aware that we do not accept the validity of its re-export controls, and that we believe the extraterritorial nature of those controls to be an infringement of the sovereignty of the United Kingdom.

We cannot, however, prevent the United States Government from seeking to apply their re-export regulations to United Kingdom companies. Moreover, we have to remember that United States companies may be prohibited from supplying sensitive goods and technology to an overseas company which breaches re-export controls and that such goods and technology are often not available from anywhere else. The United Kingdom's policy is therefore normally to allow companies to make a commercial decision about whether to comply with United States re-export controls, although we of course, stand ready to take up individual cases with the United States Government, and to do all we can to help in such cases.

When Systime was alleged in 1983 to have breached United States re-export controls by the United States Department of Commerce, the company admitted certain breaches and made it clear that it did not wish the United Kingdom Government to become involved. It preferred to handle the issue itself. This was rightly a factor that weighed heavily with the United Kingdom Government, given that the commercial interests of the company were at stake.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about this issue and his motives in raising it in tonight's debate, but Government action would, in Systime's view, not have been in the best interests of the company, which had to live, after all, with the commercial reality of a need for continued supplies from the United States. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would really claim that he knows better than the company what its interests were. It was Systime's view that its best course of action lay in negotiating directly with the United States Department of Commerce. The Government would have had to think very seriously before overriding the company's judgment on a matter which could affect its future.

The hon. Gentleman also made allegations in his speech about Ministers and officials in the Department of Trade and Industry. I entirely reject any suggestion that either Ministers, who were unnamed, or officials, who were named, have behaved improperly, or that the Government have been in any way involved in illegal acts. If the hon. Gentleman has any evidence to the contrary, I will most certainly investigate it. If not, I hope that he will not make any further such allegations.

The hon. Gentleman also made allegations about unauthorised visits by United States officials to Systime. The United States authorities are well aware of the United Kingdom's view that investigations within the United Kingdom may take place only with the prior approval of the Government and on whatever terms we may lay down. Her Majesty's Customs is not aware of any visit by United States customs officials to Systime.

To sum up, Mr. Speaker, I recognise and appreciate the concern of the hon. Member about the affairs of Systime. He has made a series of allegations, which I take seriously, including serious allegations of illegal conduct. But if he has evidence of illegal activity he should bring it to the attention of the responsible authorities so that suitable action may be taken.

Mr. Meadowcroft: The Minister said that Systime did no wish the United Kingdom Government to intervene during its problems in 1983. That was the time when the company was trying to negotiate with companies in America which might finance it but which took a different view from Systime about where its future lay. Systime believed that it would be possible to come to a financial arrangement with DEC over alleged infringements, which in the end proved impossible. The result was that at the time Systime believed that it would be better for the Government to keep out.

Regarding the Minister's point about bringing forward evidence, I shall do so, but the important thing is to air the matter in this way so that the case is on the record. We can go from there with all the various details that may be useful to the Minister in pursuing an important matter.

Mr. Pattie: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the matter is important. It is for him to judge, with his greater local knowledge, the best interests of the company and of his constituents and those of other hon. Members representing Leeds. If he chooses to raise the matter in this way, he is perfectly entitled to do so. I was not seeking to be gratuitously offensive. I was simply making the point that the matter is sufficiently serious to question how the matter should be first raised.

Mr. Ashdown: The Minister asked for evidence in support of the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft). Perhaps I can direct him to consider an internal DEC document which states:

"Digital-U.K. must control the movement of the hardware, software and know-how in the U.K., to ensure that DEC remains within U.S. and U.K. laws."

I also direct the Minister to the Attorney-General's letter to me, which states that such actions

"are unwarranted encroachments on UK jurisdiction and are contrary to international law."

That is the legal position, so why are the Government doing nothing about it? What will the Minister do to protect not Systime—because it may be too late for that company—but other British firms to which my hon. Friend has drawn attention, which may be equally suffering from what the Attorney-General considers to be illegal action?

Mr. Pattie: The hon. Gentleman has already heard my view. I do not believe that he would like a series of pyrrhic victories in terms of taking matters to the international court, or whatever international jurisdiction may be available.

However, in the absence of evidence, I believe that the better course is not to continue to dwell on past issues regarding Systime but to concentrate on what has to be done to develop its future. I hope that all hon. Members will co-operate and agree that that is the best way to proceed.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 26 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(BY ORDER)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Rural Schools

1. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to allow independent local public inquiries to be held when education authorities seek to close small rural schools and the local community has made objections.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Kirkwood: Is the Minister aware that that is a disappointing answer? Is he not aware that there is a great deal of anxiety about the process of consultation that local authorities have implemented north of the border for the closure of rural schools? The Borders regional council went through a period of consultation last year that was exemplary, but there are still problems about getting an independent element or some form of appeal procedure into the existing machinery. Will he reconsider that?

Mr. Stewart: The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires that parents must be fully consulted, and a standard form of consultation is set out in the regulations. I believe that it is right, after consultation, for the majority of cases of school closures to be decided by the locally elected representatives, the education authority.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my hon. Friend consider introducing legislation to change the basis of funding of schools so that it is on the basis of the number of pupils attending a school? Will he allow parents who wish to set up their own schools, perhaps in rural areas, to receive the equivalent of the state funding which would otherwise be provided?

Mr. Stewart: I note with interest my hon. Friend's points. I underline to him the Government's commitment to parental choice in education.

Mr. Ernie Ross: Given the example that we all had to live through in Tayside when Tayside decided to close not only rural schools, but schools in the inner city, will the Minister think again and allow an independent local inquiry when, as in the case of Tayside, there are justified arguments for not leaving it to the local authority?

Mr. Stewart: The provisions are that, in the majority of cases, the decisions should be made by the education authority. It is the elected representative of the people and I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would support local democracy.

Teachers' Dispute

2. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the effects of the teachers' action in support of their campaign for an independent pay review; and if he will make a statement.

6. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a further statement on the teachers' dispute.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I receive a great many representations which deplore, as I do, the immense damage being caused by teachers' action in this dispute. Further escalation now will not bring a settlement of the dispute any closer. Only by realistic negotiation will a solution be found.

Mr. Strang: Does the Secretary of State recognise that, in addition to the real harm to which he has already referred, teachers and parents are alarmed at the prospect of disruption to this year's O-grade and higher examinations? Is he also aware that the teachers are more determined than ever and that the Government have a responsibility to provide education for our children? The Educational Institute of Scotland is prepared to negotiate when new proposals are put forward, and the one thing that is needed to settle the dispute is a new initiative from the Government. When will the Government bring forward a new initiative?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is concerned about the damage that could be done to examinations by the disruption that the teachers are proposing. That must bear heavily on the individual teachers if they carry out the kind of threat that is being made. I hope that, on reflection, they will decide that that would not be appropriate.

As to the way in which this matter can be resolved, I remind the hon. Gentleman that all the education authorities—Labour-controlled as well as Conservative-controlled — have insisted that any outcome of this dispute must involve a package covering conditions of service as well as pay. However, although the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association has shown its willingness to think on those terms, the EIS refuses to do so. Given that all the education authorities are calling for such a joint package covering both aspects, I hope that Her Majesty's Opposition will call for such a solution.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Secretary of State recall that some six weeks ago, when he was appointed to his present high office, there was hope that he, as a new broom, would be able to look afresh at the teachers dispute? Notwithstanding what he has said, what initiative does he propose to take as a response to the meeting that he had with the Scottish churches? Does he not realise that many parents, not to mention teachers, were looking towards negotiations between himself and the churches to come up with a settlement?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will recall that after the meeting the Church representatives said that, like me, they found the meeting to have been useful in helping to clarify a number of points. At that meeting I said that the objectives of both the education authorities and the Government on conditions of service make it right and proper that those who wish to see changes in conditions of service and contractual matters should be dealt with on a flexible basis. We accept that if the teachers do not receive all that they would like on pay, the other changes that many would wish to see in the education service may have to take that into account. Compromise is required all round. I emphasise that the EIS must show flexibility. It has not yet put a claim on the table or shown any willingness to consider conditions of service as part of the package, despite reported signs that its leader, Mr. John Pollock, has suggested that this might be appropriate.

Sir Hector Monro: To a parent or any unbiased observer, it is incredible that the EIS will not discuss the favourable terms that my right hon. and learned Friend has offered it. Does he hope to have meetings in the next two weeks or so that will bring this unforunate dispute to a conclusion, bearing in mind that all the weight of evidence now is that the teachers, parents and others have had more than enough of this strike

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the £125 million of new resources that the Government have said would be available for teachers' salaries on top of what might be negotiated in the normal way. It is also worth pointing out that Scottish teachers should reflect on the fact that their colleagues in England and Wales have today balloted by a two to one majority in favour of an interim settlement on the basis of the resources available in England and Wales, which are comparable to the resources available in Scotland.

Mr. Pollock: May we take it from the previous exchanges that my right hon. and learned Friend still values the good intentions of the Churches in their desire to act as honest brokers in this——

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I know that there is another question on the Order Paper about this.

Mr. Pollock: Do the Government still value——

Mr. Douglas: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of this question?

Mr. Douglas: Yes it does. There seems little point in tabling questions if hon. Members are called beforehand to ask supplementary questions on the exact wording of those questions.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This question is on the effects of the teachers' strike for an independent pay review. I judge that the supplementaries are in order. However, I draw the attention of the House, as I was about to when the first supplementary question was asked, to the fact that there are subsequent questions—Nos. 12 and 13—on this matter.

Mr. Pollock: May we take it from the earlier exchanges that my right hon. and learned Friend values the efforts of the Churches to act as honest brokers in this unhappy affair? At the same time, will he take pains to emphasise that real progress depends entirely on the parties directly involved in the dispute negotiating, and seeking a reasonable and responsible settlement?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. The outcome to the problem has to be primarily for the employers and the employees. I emphasise to the Opposition and those who criticise the Government that the education authorities across the political spectrum have emphasised the need for package proposals covering conditions of service as well as pay. The Government have shown their willingness, in an unprecedented way, to help in the dispute by offering at this stage, before any claim is put forward, no less than £125 million of new resources.

Mr. Speaker: I must ask the House to keep off the subject of Churches in this question.

Mr. McKelvey: Does the Secretary of State understand that his free market economy is not working in connection with the supply of teachers? Does he share my concern about the recent loss of teachers in Kilmarnock academy, and, in particular, the loss of a biology teacher who has just gone into industry for a 65 per cent. increase in salary? When will the Secretary of State meet the EIS and start negotiating properly to ensure that there is an independent inquiry, which may not resolve that anomaly, but will at least get the teachers back to work?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that there are certain shortages of mathematics and science teachers. However, when considering the whole of the teaching profession, there are far more qualified and able people wishing to take up posts in teaching than there are posts available. The teacher's unions would be the first to reject any suggestion that differential salaries should be paid to teachers in different departments. The shortages of teachers in any areas could be corrected if the unions were prepared to contemplate such action. There is not, however, the slightest suggestion that the teachers' unions are interested in that course of action.

Mr. Henderson: Does my right hon. Friend know that a number of parents cannot understand why the teachers, who have a just claim for more money, do not appear to be picking up last year's normal annual increment, and the forthcoming year's annual increment, which, I understand, is available without strings attached? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that that is a sensible basis on which to start negotiations, with all the factors involved, if the teachers want a relative increase in wages in relation to other groups of graduate workers in local government?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct, and Scottish teachers must be asking themselves whether the tactics of their union negotiators are correct as those tactics have led to no increase in their pay packets during the dispute. That cannot be in the teachers' interest, nor is it a necessary part of the dispute.

Mr. Roy Jenkins: Is the right hon. Gentleman able to take some independent initiative on this matter, which many hon. Members hoped for when he was appointed to his position, or is he tied across the board, like a tin to a cat's tail, to the policies of the Secretary of State for Education and Science, which show every sign of being an unprecedented disaster for education at all levels?

Mr. Rifkind: The right hon. Gentleman would be the first to admit that conditions of service and matters

affecting contracts of employment are quite distinct in Scotland, and clearly any solutions to these problems would be geared to Scottish requirements. However, if the right hon. Gentleman is seeking to raise the matter of overall resources for teachers' pay, he would be the first to accept that the teachers' unions in the various parts of the United Kingdom would be the first to draw attention to any significant difference between the pay offered to teachers in Scotland and that offered to those in England. Whichever group was offered more, the other unions would expect equity and parity of treatment. The right hon. Gentleman would not dispute the accuracy of that view.

Mr. Hirst: With practically every secondary school in my constituency affected by strike action, may I remind my right hon. Friend of the deep anxiety felt by parents and pupils alike, as well as the anxiety felt by many reasonable teachers, who want to see an end to the strike? Does my right hon. Friend agree that while the teachers' demand for a more realistic salary structure is a legitimate one, it must be accompanied by fair and reasonable conditions of service which avoid a recurrence of what has happened? As this wretched dispute has dragged on for nearly 18 months, will my right hon. Friend personally intervene to get negotiations under way?

Mr. Rifkind: I assure my hon. Friend that I am very willing to do all that is in my power to help bring the dispute to an early end. If teachers wish to be paid for the work that they do, it is not unreasonable that their contracts and conditions of service should also reflect what they actually do.

Mr. Millan: The Secretary of State talks as though the £125 million were Government money, but will not the bulk of it have to come from local authorities and thus from ratepayers? In any event, does he appreciate that 10 per cent. spread over four years on top of an indeterminate base will not settle the dispute and that more money must be put on the table? Will he take an initiative in that respect in the hope of bringing forward what he calls sensible negotiations?

Mr. Rifkind: The £125 million is new Government money which the Government are prepared to provide for local authorities to help finance increases in teacher's salaries above that which would be negotiated in the normal way. It would represent an average of about £1,000 in the salary of a teacher in Scotland. [HON. MEMBERS: "Over four years."] It would mean that at the end of that period a teacher would have £1,000 more than he would otherwise have had. I think that most people would acknowledge that that is a fairly significant increase. I genuinely put it to the right hon. Gentleman that the Government's proposal and the additional sums to which I have referred should surely be the basis for negotiations to begin between the teachers unions and the education authorities.

Sir Russell Johnston: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, fair or not, there is great disappointment that there has been no movement since he became Secretary of State for Scotland? Will he consider convening all-party discussions with the teachers to see whether there is any way of ending the long deadlock in a spirit of compromise? Does he agree that unless there is a settlement by the end of March we look set to have a strike lasting until the next general election, with irreparable damage to schoolchildren?

Mr. Rifkind: I think that there is, indeed, all-party agreement that an outcome to the dispute must be a package including conditions of service as well as pay. If the hon. Gentleman can make representations to the EIS to the effect that it should accept that as an essential part of any satisfactory outcome I think that that would enable significant progress to be made.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my right hon. Friend aware that not only are parents fed up with the disruption of teaching, but they are terribly concerned about the possibility of this year's examinations producing disastrous results for the children's futures? Will he confirm that he does not rule out the possibility that he may be required to take measures to have the necessary powers for him to impose on the teachers' unions a review of the conditions of service under which they now work and are remunerated——

Mr. Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Walker: —so that teachers are adequately rewarded for the work that they do?

Mr. Rifkind: With regard to examinations, I think that the Scottish Examination Board should be congratulated on the splendid work that it is doing in trying to ensure that the maximum possible number of markers will be available. The latest estimate suggests that slightly more than two thirds of the necessary number will be available. Although that will not prevent all disruption, it will ensure that the bulk of the work is properly done.

Mr. Ewing: Is the Secretary of State aware that the difference between him and the leaders of the EIS is that they enjoy the overwhelming support of their members for the action that they are taking, whereas he enjoys no support from anyone in Scotland for what he is doing about the dispute? Is he further aware that since he took up his high office he has done absolutely nothing to bring about a resolution of the dispute, despite the promises that he made when he was appointed? He rightly referred to John Pollock's statement at Galashiels yesterday. Many I now plead with him to take up the offer made by Mr. Pollock yesterday in asking for a substantial offer to be made so as to allow negotiations to begin? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that if he does not take up that offer he will be solely responsible for the severe and serious damage being done to education in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman would have made a more positive and helpful contribution to the resolution of the dispute if he had given his unqualified support to Strathclyde, Central and Fife regional councils in their demand, with other local authorities, that the EIS should accept a package involving conditions of service a well as pay. If the hon. Gentleman is seriously interested in helping to resolve the dispute, let him support the Labour education authorities.

Drug Addiction

4. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress of Government measures to seek to counter drug addiction in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): We have introduced many positive measures with the aim of reducing both the supply of and the demand for drugs. Earlier this month I launched the second stage of the Scottish campaign against drug misuse; and I announced a substantial increase in the strength of the Scottish crime squad specifically to tackle drug-related crime.

Mr. Brown: Does the Minister not understand that this is a national emergency—an emergency compounded by the fact that many heroin users unfortunately now have AIDS? Will the Minister provide the resources for dealing with this problem, even if it means providing clean needles? More important, will he listen to Dr. Martin Plant and his colleagues, who have confirmed the link between unemployment and drug abuse? Will the Minister study their report and bear in mind that it was supported by the Scottish Home and Health Department?

Mr. MacKay: I understand the hon. Gentleman's reasons for suggesting that needles should be made available to drug addicts in order to prevent the spread of AIDS. I believe that it is a serious step to take, as it could be interpreted as encouraging heroin abuse and leading to its increase. However, I am deeply concerned both about heroin addiction and the spread of AIDS. My chief medical officer has set up a committee of experts to advise him and me of the spread of this virus. I shall take very seriously any advice made to me by the chief medical officer or by the committee.

Mr. Corrie: Will my hon. Friend accept that drug addiction is affecting children at a very early age? Will he have discussions with the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), so that lectures can be given in schools to give children some idea of the horrendous problems that drugs cause and which may lead to death?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is quite right. Some people have not approved of the advertising campaign conducted by my Department and by the Scottish Health Education Group. It is right that we should warn the public, especially youngsters, of the dangers of drug misuse, and not just heroin abuse. I can tell my hon. Friend that today my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) has announced the setting up of a working group to develop in-service training courses on drug misuse for community education workers.

Scottish Assembly

5. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce legislation to establish an elected Scottish Assembly.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): No, Sir.

Mr. Home Robertson: As we approach the seventh anniversary of the referendum in which the Scottish people voted, by a majority of over 77,000, including, I understand, the Secretary of State for Scotland, to establish a directly elected Scottish Assembly, will the Minister accept that the minority administration of Scotland is becoming intolerable? I wonder whether the Secretary of State for Scotland is aware that I am introducing a private Member's Bill on Tuesday based on the principles which nine years ago in this House he himself suggested were good. I wonder whether the Secretary of State would like to sponsor my Bill and, if not, what has changed in the interim period?

Mr. Ancram: I must congratulate the hon. Member on his singlemindedness and consistency in bringing up this subject every year. I remind the House that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State was the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland when he wound up the debate which repealed the Scotland Act 1978. He recognised that the referendum had displayed a lack of demand — two thirds of the Scottish people eligible to vote did not vote in favour of the Bill. The hon. Member would be more honest in his approach to the Scottish people if he were to explain to them that the effect of his proposals would be to increase taxation for Scottish people.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that the Scots already are grotesquely over-represented at every level in Parliament? We already have Scottish Question Time and Scottish Grand Committees, and the general obsession with Scottish affairs is positively unhealthy. If the suggestion of an Assembly were ever to be taken up, would he undertake to reduce or eliminate Scottish Question Time, Scottish Grand Committees and all other elements of over-representation in the House?

Mr. Ancram: I cannot agree with my hon. Friend that Scotland is over-represented. It is well represented, although we will have to wait until after the next general election to see Scotland represented in a more proper way —when more Conservatives are elected.

Mr. Dewar: I am not surprised that the Secretary of State is not answering the question himself. May I ask the junior Minister, who is presumably empowered to speak for the Scottish Office, what the position on devolution is in the Scottish Office? The Minister said that the Secretary of State advocated or supported, presumably reluctantly, the repeal of the Scotland Act 1978 on the basis that there was a lack of demand in Scotland. Does the Scottish Office team believe that the Scottish people do not want devolution, or that it is not right in principle? If it is the lack of demand, there is now clear evidence that, if the Scottish people were consulted, they would overwhelmingly support the principle of devolution.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is presumably referring to opinion polls, which ask a simple question, but do not ask whether the Scottish people would be prepared to vote for an Assembly that involved an extra tier of taxation, which the Labour party proposes, and an extra tier of bureaucracy, which it also proposes. If they were honest enough to ask the Scottish people that question, they would get a resounding no in reply.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister acknowledge that his reply is the best possible argument for the Government to sponsor a constitutional convention to establish the ground rules for an Assembly? Does the Minister recognise that the overwhelming majority of the Scottish people have accepted that there is a degree of devolution to the Scottish Office, but no accountability to the Scottish people? The Conservative party, with 14 per cent. of the votes, does not represent the Scottish people.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman has a rather lowly opinion of the role that he plays in the House. He is

supposed to be part of the democratic process by which the Government are accountable. His party, among others, has put forward proposals on devolution, and suggests that that is a panacea for all Scotland's ills. When proposals were put forward in legislation making clear to the Scottish people the extra costs and burdens that they would have to bear, two thirds refused to vote in favour of them.

Highlands and Islands Airports

7. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much subisdy was paid to the Civil Aviation Authority for the running of the highlands and islands airports for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ancram: I have deposited in the Library details of the subsidy paid in each of the past five years. No separately indentifiable figures for grant-in-aid paid prior to 1980 are available.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware that the public purse, properly, supports the operations of the highlands and islands airports. Can he confirm that after the passage of the Airports Bill the highlands and islands airports, like the local authority airports, will be required to obtain the best possible services, if necessary by seeking outside tenders?

Mr. Ancram: The new arrangements, whereby the CAA will operate aerodromes in Scotland as a separate company, follow a long period of uncertainty about their future. It is only right that the arrangements are given time to work. I agree with my hon. Friend that we expect better value for money from the arrangements. He will accept that the first priority is that the present service to the communities involved with the aerodromes should continue.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Does the Minister accept that some airports in the highlands and islands are extensively used by the military? Stornoway airport, for example, is a Ministry of Defence airport. If these installations are to be dumped on us, should not the Government foot the bill?

Mr. Ancram: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that Stornoway airport is owned by the Ministry of Defence and operated by the CAA. He must understand that the Government have recognised the essential social function of the aerodromes, which is why we continue to subsidise their operation.

Mr. Pollock: Will my hon. Friend confirm that when the airports were offered for sale some time ago no commercial interest was shown in them? Will he give an undertaking to my constituents in Moray that he recognises the Government's social obligations to provide an adequate service for them?

Mr. Ancram: The Government recognise the essential social functions of the aerodromes, which is why we have subsidised them and will continue to do so as necessary. Our reason for not pursuing their privatisation was precisely that none of the interested parties offered adequate assurances of continuity of service. That is what we intend to provide.

Student Grant

8. **Mr. Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received recently from the National Union of Students (Scotland) concerning the level of the student grant.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend the Minister with responsibility for industry and education has received a letter dated 15 January from the president of the National Union of Students (Scotland) on the subject. He has agreed to meet representatives of the union on 17 March 1986.

Mr. Steel: When the Minister meets representatives of the NUS, will he take into account the changes both in the assessment of parental contribution and in housing and supplementary benefits? As a result of those changes, one student in my constituency is expected to survive the summer vacation on £2 a week.

Mr. Rifkind: The changes in supplementary benefit relate to the short vacations and not to the long summer vacation. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that even taking into account the changes that are proposed the United Kingdom will continue to have by far the most generous system of grants for students of any major country in the Western world.

Mr. Henderson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that the best universities in Scotland have withdrawn from the National Union of Students? Because most of the English universities still adhere to the National Union of Students is no reason why we should not review yet again the amount of grants paid to the National Union of Students.

Mr. Rifkind: That is quite a separate matter, but clearly the authority with which the NUS speaks in Scotland is influenced by the number of universities affiliated to it.

Mr. Dewar: Does the Minister accept that there is now genuine hardship not only among students but among parents who have to support them? Clearly the increase for 1986-87 of 2 per cent. represents a cut in real terms in student incomes. Does the Minister accept the NUS compilation that under this Government there has been a fall in the purchasing power of the basic grant by 20 per cent.? If he does accept that, is he prepared to defend it, or will he use his good offices with his colleagues in the Department of Education and Science to do something about it? Has the Secretary of State no sympathy with the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's argument, which links the level of grant, the availability of student finance, to access to higher education?

Mr. Rifkind: Dealing with the hon. Gentleman's final point, I have to say to him that notwithstanding the decisions that have been made on student grants over the last few years, the number of those actively seeking admission to higher education in Scotland is greater than ever before. This year there are 5,000 more Scottish students than there were in 1979, when this Government came into office. The suggestion that somehow the Government's policy on grants is deterring youngsters from coming into higher education is not true. If the Government were to accede to the NUS demand for a minimum of £35 per student per week, that would add

£550 million to the cost of supporting students. I do not believe that even the hon. Gentleman would wish to commit a future Labour Government to costs of that kind.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

9. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total revenue value of equity realised by the Highlands and Islands Development Board in the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Rifkind: The total value of share investments realised was £419,701.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Secretary of State accept that the provision in the Highlands and Islands Development (Scotland) Act, which my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) piloted through the House in 1968 to allow the Highlands and Islands Development Board to keep revenue from equity realised, was designed to enhance the financial viability of the board to support projects in the highlands and islands? Will the Secretary of State give a guarantee that this will continue beyond the present financial year, particularly at a time when there is a great squeeze on the board's finances? Will he continue the guarantee given by his predecessor, that any viable scheme presented to the Highlands and Islands Development Board will not fail because of the board having inadequate funding?

Mr. Rifkind: The expected receipts of the board are always taken into account when grant-in-aid is being determined. I can give an absolute assurance to the hon. Gentleman that none of the commitments that the board has entered into this year will not be met because of any financial constraint. The board will be able to meet all the commitments it has entered into. Since this Government came into office, resources available to the Highlands and Islands Development Board have been increased from £17 million in 1979 to £30 million in the current year.

Mr. Ewing: The Secretary of State is always going on about the need to give incentives. What incentive is available to the Highlands and Islands Development Board if, every time it makes a profit on investments, the Secretary of State takes it back?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman puts forward a proposition that no one else has put forward and then tries to criticise it. The Highlands and Islands Development Board has had the advantage of the receipts it has received over the last few years.

Afforestation

10. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about how the economics of new afforestation schemes on upland areas are assessed by him.

Mr. John MacKay: Forestry grant schemes are administered by the Forestry Commission, whose consideration of an application for planting grants embraces agricultural, land use and environmental aspects. The expected return from the commission's own planting schemes is assessed on the basis of net discounted revenue.

Mr. Chapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer, but since upland sites generally result in the least economic afforestation schemes, should not Government policy ensure that commercial tree planting in our nation's uplands must not be at the expense of highly important and sensitive landscaped areas? Will he confirm that some recent schemes have had a deleterious effect on such environments?

Mr. MacKay: Without knowing exactly what schemes my hon. Friend has in mind, I would rather not comment on the last part of his question. The expected rate of return from private planting is entirely up to the owner who is proposing the private planting, but I accept that the right balance must be sought between forestry and the needs of nature conservation. The commission will accept for grant-aid only those proposals which are sound in forestry and environmental terms. The Forestry Commission consults the Nature Conservancy Council on SSSIs and such matters.

Mr. Dalyell: Have the SSSIs been taken into account in the contingency plans for the transfer of Forestry Commission property to private ownership?

Mr. MacKay: The matter has not gone nearly as far as to consider the impact of SSSIs, but the commission, either for its own planting or for the making of grants to the private sector, must take the SSSIs into account and must consult the NCC in these matters.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: When blanket afforestation is given the go-ahead over a large area, is any consideration given to environmental matters?

Mr. MacKay: Yes, indeed it is. The private forestry industry and the commission are more mindful now than perhaps they have been in times past about the environmental consequences of planting. The commission and the private sector take those matters into account along with the NCC and, where necessary, they have spoken to bodies such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other environmental groups.

Mr. Maclennan: The Minister has said that the economic rate of return for private forestry companies is a matter for them, but how does he propose to safeguard the public interest in wide-scale afforestation? Does it not strengthen the case for extending planning controls over forestry to ensure that all considerations which ought to be kept in mind, including conservation and proper land use, are subject to the review of the local authority?

Mr. MacKay: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point, because I am aware of the problems in his constituency, which is heavily forested, like my own. The Forestry Commission consults the planning authority—the district council—when it comes to planting, along with the other bodies that it consults before it comes to a decision either about its own planting or about grants to the private sector.

Mr. Corrie: Will my hon. Friend accept that, with the enormous excesses of food production, not only in Britain but throughout Europe, and the enormous cost to Britain of timber imports, if in future the rural areas are to survive, there will have to be a move towards forestry and therefore grades of land that are not allowed to be planted now may have to be allowed to be planted in future? Does my hon. Friend accept that forestry, properly planted with a mixture of hard and soft woods, does not spoil the environment?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend is right. My Department is considering redefining the land that might be freed for planting in future. Against the background of increasing food surpluses, forestry offers a sensible use of land and one which employs a lot of people in the countryside, which must be something that both sides of the House would welcome.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is supposed to be part of my job to make life difficult for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, but just this once I am prepared to allow the Scottish Office in on the act. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the universal opposition to the idea of handing over the precious national asset of the Scottish Forestry Commission forestry enterprise to the private sector? Will he categorically reject the principle of privatising the forestry enterprise of the Forestry Commission? The hon. Gentleman told my hon. Friend, the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that the matter had not gone that far, but just how far has it gone?

Mr. MacKay: The policy on the sale of Forestry Commission land was set out in a statement to the House by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State, the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger), on 8 November 1984. That remains the position.

Mr. Steel: We have all read inspired reports about how the Secretary of State for Scotland has been fighting against his Cabinet colleagues to stop a change in that policy. It remains the policy at the moment, but is the Minister able to give an undertaking that it will remain the policy during the lifetime of this Government?

Mr. MacKay: I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman does not have experience of Government matters and, therefore, perhaps does not appreciate that the Government keep their policy on all fronts continuously under review. There have been informal discussions between Forestry Ministers about various aspects of forestry policy, but, as I said a few minutes ago, the policy remains that stated by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr.

Dunblane Bypass

11. **Mr. Michael Forsyth** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now announce the line of route of the Dunblane bypass; and if he will indicate the proposed starting date for construction *(a)* if there is no public inquiry and *(b)* if a public inquiry is held.

Mr. Ancram: The orders for the main line and associated side roads for the Dunblane bypass are to be published in draft on 28 February. If no public inquiry is necessary, construction will begin as soon as the statutory procedures are completed and funds can be made available. I hope that this will be possible during the financial year 1987-88. If an inquiry is required, the scheme would be unlikely to start before mid-1988.

Mr. Forsyth: As this bypass was originally promised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) when he was a candidate in my constituency, may I, on behalf of my constituents, welcome the announcement that my hon. Friend has made? I welcome his assurance that it will be given priority and that it will be under construction in 1987-88 provided that there are no strong objections to the line of route. I am very grateful.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the welcome that he has given to my announcement. I can confirm that we attach priority to this scheme, and we are well aware of the beneficial effects that it will have on the community in Dunblane.

Mr. Norman Hogg: If the Minister is able to say something about Dunblane, can he say when we will be told the line of the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman will just have to be patient.

Teachers' Dispute

12. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on meetings between his office and the Churches in Scotland on the current dispute in Scottish schools.

13. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his recent discussions with the Church representatives and the parties involved in the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Allan Stewart: My right hon. and learned Friend had a useful exchange of views with representatives of the Churches on 10 February. He emphasised that any final package had to deal with teachers' duties and conditions of service as well as pay, and said that he recognised that a balance had to be struck between the aspirations of both sides if an early end to the dispute was to be found. He expressed the hope that the negotiations between teachers and employers would now begin on the basis of the resources available.

Mr. Douglas: Will the Parliamentary Under-Secretary admit that it was the Churches in Scotland that met the Secretary of State and that they showed an inclination and desire to preserve the distinctiveness of Scottish education? Does he therefore agree that no comparison should be made between negotiations in England and Wales and the Scottish position? He ought to know, and the Secretary of State ought to recognise, that the Scottish teachers are determined to have their claim conceded, and the Minister ought to take some action to get this vexatious dispute settled as soon as possible.

Mr. Stewart: The House will recognise that the Scottish Churches have had a long interest in education. The hon. Gentleman referred to conceding the teachers' claim, but the teachers have not put in a claim.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister agree that while the Churches' initiative is greatly welcome, the complicated tripartite nature of these negotiations makes agreement particularly difficult? Will he confirm that he has received the suggestion from a number of quarters, including myself, that the appointment of an independent conciliator, who could identify the position of all the parties involved, as well as the level of flexibility on this issue, might help towards an agreement? Does he agree that there is nothing to be lost, and possibly everything to be gained, by the appointment of a conciliator, and will the Government give this further consideration?

Mr. Stewart: As the hon. Gentleman knows, throughout this dispute he has made one or two constructive suggestions and he has generally received a

much more favourable response from the Government than from the EIS. I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that the NAS/UWT has suggested that the Scottish dispute should be referred to ACAS, but the EIS has refused.

Mr. Kennedy: Does the Minister agree that during this long, drawn-out and damaging dispute, the running has increasingly been made by initiatives from the Churches, all the Opposition parties in Scotland and other interested bodies? As all the Opposition parties, and the Churches, were willing to give the Secretary of State every possible support, or at least every good wish, in bringing in a new broom to settle the dispute, it is a matter of profound disappointment that, although the personalities may have changed, the tune remains the same? Can the Minister offer something more constructive?

Mr. Stewart: I repudiate what the hon. Gentleman has said. The Government have taken initiative after initiative to try to resolve the dispute. The problem with the dispute in Scotland is that the EIS refuses to enter into normal pay negotiations by putting in any pay claim. It also refuses to negotiate on the basis of the type of pay and conditions package that has been put forward by the Labour-led education authorities. The sooner realistic negotiations start to resolve the dispute, the better.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that, like parents, the Churches have a real interest in finding a solution to the problem? Does he agree that the only solution that could make any sense is one that embraces conditions so that we know exactly what teachers are being paid for and, more important, one that ensures that teachers are rewarded adequately for what they do?

Mr. Stewart: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is interesting to note that the smaller unions have at various times suggested pay and conditions packages. I understand that the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association recently put forward such a package and that it was rejected by the EIS.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the Minister aware that, when I joined parents in Lenzie in my constituency a week last Saturday, in extremely cold weather, they supported the Churches' initiative and the teachers and had great difficulty understanding why the Government will not agree to an independent pay tribunal? They concluded that that was the Government's stance because they know that an independent inquiry would be bound to support the teachers' case.

Mr. Stewart: Parents in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and in the rest of Scotland, want the dispute ended. The Government and the education authorities, including those led by the hon. Gentleman's party, have consistently and rightly said that a lasting resolution of the dispute must involve conditions of service as well as pay. I believe that the great majority of teachers now realise that. I urge the EIS to enter into negotiations. As my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) said, the submission of a normal pay claim would at least get negotiations under way. That would be a major step forward.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Warrant Sales

41. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he last met the Scottish Law Commission to discuss the law on warrant sales.

46. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Scottish Law Commission to discuss proposals for changes in the law on warrant sales; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): I meet the chairman and members of the Scottish Law Commission both formally and informally from time to time. The Government are seeking public comments on the commission's report on diligence and debtor protection, including its proposals for reform of the warrant sale procedure. Once the period of consultation is over, I anticipate meeting the Scottish Law Commission again before final policy decisions on implementation of the proposals are taken.

Mr. Canavan: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman recall that when he was an up-and-coming young Back-Bench Member of Parliament, before he was sucked into the Westminster Establishment by patronage and appointments to being the Solicitor-General for Scotland and a Queen's counsel and all that, he and his ministerial mate, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) were very sympathetic to a private Member's Bill which I introduced to abolish warrant sale and to replace it with a system of debt arbitration? Now that the hon. and learned Gentleman is Solicitor-General for Scotland, with all of the power that that entails, does he not have a responsibility to do something about warrant sales and to tell the Scottish Law Commission that it has been dithering about this matter for 13 or 14 years? Is it not high time that the Government took the initiative and introduced legislation to abolish this barbaric practice?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Law Commission's report has been published. We wished to have consultation over a short period, and the period of consultation that we suggested should end in the middle of March. Several views have been expressed in Scotland about the proposals of the Law Commission, which were favourable in the main. If the hon. Gentleman, who I know is concerned about the matter, or any organisation with which he is connected, wishes to express an opinion about the proposals, I would be grateful if they would do so at the earliest possible moment, and certainly before the middle of next month. I remain of the view that I expressed some time ago. We wish to make warrant sale procedures more humane and sensible, but we do not wish to leave ourselves in the position where those who find credit most difficult to obtain cannot do so because of the changes.

Mr. McKelvey: Does the Solicitor-General share my abhorrence of those who pursue that squalid type of action, which seldom realises the initial debt, but seeks to humiliate people and at the end of the day deprives poor people of the few bits and sticks of furniture that they might have and takes away their essential household contents? In the light of the investigations, it would be better to end warrant sales.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The report to which I have already referred deals carefully with that problem. If the hon. Gentleman cares to consider the details of the report, he will see that it addresses his complaints. I urge him to do so. If he believes that changes should be made to the proposals, I extend the invitation to him and to any organisation to let me know as soon as possible. I would be grateful for such action. I recognise that there is a need for change.

Mr. Hirst: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that warrant sales are anachronistic, an undignified experience for anybody and should have no place in civilised society?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My hon. Friend will recollect that in our manifesto at the general election we expressed a clear commitment to bring to an end what we believed to be inhumane procedures which currently apply. If it is difficult to do away with all the processes so that nothing can be done about getting payment for the debt due, at least we wish to ensure at the earliest possible date a distinction between those who can pay and those who will not pay.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Solicitor-General give a guarantee that those undignified and anachronistic procedures will be swept away before there is any possibility of those defaulting on the community charge becoming subjected to them?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman's own party is among the organisations and parties that have failed to comment on the warrant sales. As a member of the Faculty of Advocates, I am sure that he has taken the opportunity of reading that valuable, albeit long, report. I look forward to an immediate expression of his view on what is right and what is wrong.

Lord Justice General

42. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he last met the Lord Justice General; and what subjects were discussed.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I met the Lord Justice General on 21 February, when we discussed various matters relating to the administration of the criminal justice system in Scotland.

Mr. Pollock: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware of the considerable concern in Scotland about the impact of the large number of criminal appeals on the progress of civil business in the courts? Can he advise us whether any consultation with the Lord Justice General has enabled him to take any step to remedy the problem?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The problem to which my hon. Friend refers is, unhappily, a real one. We have time limits in criminal business and, accordingly, at first instance and on appeal it must have priority. Because of the problem of civil business, my hon. Friend should be aware that the chairman of the Scottish Law Commission, Lord Maxwell, has been invited to consider the way in which we might more effectively use judicial time in the superior courts. I hope that that problem will be carefully addressed by the chairman. If my hon. Friend has any view on better arrangements for judicial time in the superior courts, it would be welcome.

Mr. Dewar: As the Lord Justice General has an obvious interest in the housing of the High Court, does the Solicitor-General for Scotland intend to discuss with the Lord Justice General plans to remodel the High Court in Glasgow, and if so, are those plans going ahead?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: That has been a matter under discussion with the Lord President, but not on Friday. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the buildings of the High Court and gaol square are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. and learned Friend believe that the Lord Justice General is aware that there is a long tradition of Labour Members bellyaching about social problems, a good example of which is warrant sales?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I did not discuss warrant sales with the Lord President, but to go back a question, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that that is often the case.

Cigarettes (Sale to Children)

43. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will discuss with procurators fiscal the number of prosecutions for the sale of cigarettes to children.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No. I am satisfied that procurators fiscal are aware of the relevant provision, which is section 18 of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, and that they will give every proper consideration to such reports received by them.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Solicitor-General aware that the latest figures show that the illegal sales of cigarettes to children in Scotland amounted to £9·5 million last year? Why does he not take some action to stop that? It is the law of the land, like any other law. Will he take vigorous action to ensure that it is enforced and to stop tobacco companies hooking children on this fatal habit in their relentless pursuit of profit?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I do not know where the hon. Gentleman got that figure or how he ascertained it——

Mr. Foulkes: From an Office of Population Censuses and Surveys document.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Whatever view he or I take of the matter, unhappily for him, the Scottish courts still require evidence and it must be corroborated. I have recently emphasised to procurators fiscal that if evidence of sales is available, prosecutions should be mounted.

Mr. Corrie: Is my hon. Friend aware of the growing problem of children buying cigarettes from cigarette machines? Will he ask the appropriate authorities whether those machines can be put in sites where they can be carefully watched, so that the number of prosecutions can be reduced, not increased?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: My hon. Friend makes a good point, but he highlights the point that it is extremely difficult to prevent the sale of cigarettes to children from vending machines. I hope that his point will be properly appreciated.

Mr. Maxton: As so many people die from smoking-related diseases and there is increasing evidence that very few people start to smoke in adulthood—it is usually in childhood — will the Solicitor-General ensure that the Government support the Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) to strengthen the law in this area? Will he also, as his colleagues do in England and Wales, collect evidence about the sale of cigarettes to under-16s, which his office does not do at present?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) is aware, even if the hon. Gentleman is not, that the Government support his Bill. The hon. Gentleman must accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay) the Under-Secretary of State who is responsible for health in Scotland is positively aggressive in the way that he puts forward his views on the campaign to prevent or dissuade children from starting to smoke, whether they are aged under 16 or not. However, that is a matter of persuasion. I am responsible for those who break the law under the 1937 Act, and I have already said that we are considering the matter carefully.

Philippines

3.33 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tim Renton): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the position in the Philippines.

The House will be aware of the dramatic development yesterday in the Philippines which led to Mrs. Aquino taking up office as President. I am sure that the House will wish to join me in warmly welcoming this development, the more so because it has come about with the minimum of bloodshed and violence.

The Government wish President Aquino and her colleagues well in the fulfilment of their new and heavy responsibilities. The task of restoring the Philippines to peace, stability and economic regeneration will, indeed, be challenging.

We have been greatly impressed by the courage President Aquino, her colleagues and the Filipino people have shown in defence of democracy. This, and the evident wish of the Government and people of the Philippines for reconciliation, bodes well for the future.

The Government look forward to a close and positive working relationship with Mrs. Aquino and her colleagues. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is sending the President a congratulatory message. I also pay tribute to our ambassador in Manila, Mr. Robin McLaren, and to his staff. The information and advice which they have provided, and their protective role in relation to the British community, has been an excellent example of our missions abroad at work.

President Aquino said last night:

"A new life starts for our country tomorrow."

The House will, I know, wish to send her and the people of the Philippines its warmest good wishes on this new start.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): We unreservedly join the Minister in welcoming the triumph of democracy under President Aquino. We hail the victory of people's power over a corrupt dictatorship as a model for the peaceful transition of power in other troubled lands about which we differ from this Government's policies, such as Chile and South Africa. We praise the role of the Church in the Philippines and the constructive role played, ultimately, by the United States Administration, who acted swiftly, decisively and to good effect to end the conflict.

Will the Minister confirm that in the circumstances no formal act of recognition of President Aquino is necessary from our Government? Does he also agree that those events pose a series of challenges for President Aquino —to cast aside the oligarchies of the past, to repeal the draconian laws and to meet the popular expectations of the radical restructuring which is vital if the insurgency is not to start again?

There is a challenge to the United States Administration, who must avoid a narrow, strategic and military view and come to terms with the fundamentally different relationship which must result from the new nationalism in the Philippines. Finally, there is a challenge to us in Europe, as the new Government may well look to Europe, especially since the accession of Spain to the European Community, as a counter to United States influence. To that end, will the Minister tell the House what efforts he will make to consult our EEC partners on the development of joint policies in that area?

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his remarks, especially those at the beginning of his statement. He is correct to say that no formal action is required for the recognition of the new Government. We do not recognise Governments, we recognise states; so no formal action is required. I agree with him that the United States Government are to be congratulated on the part that they played in the encouragement of the restoration of democracy. I also agree with his statement about the challenges that lie ahead of President Aquino. The whole House will agree that she has shown great restraint and firmness of character, especially in recent days. That must augur well for her ability to tackle the undoubtedly heavy tasks that lie ahead.

On the hon. Gentleman's last point, about the Community's role in this matter, he will be aware that the 12 Foreign Affairs Ministers who met yesterday issued a joint statement on the situation in the Philippines and warmly commended Mrs. Aquino on the part that she has played. There are two meetings in prospect between the European Community and the Association of the South East Asian nations. One, between officials, may well take place in Manila towards the end of June or early July. There is also the possibility of a European Community Foreign Ministers' meeting when again the whole subject of co-operation between the Community and the ASEAN countries, including the Philippines, will be fully discussed.

Sir Peter Blaker (Blackpool, South): Is it not clear that, despite the welcome changes of the past few days, the new Philippines Government is likely to face considerable problems in establishing and preserving stability? Will Her Majesty's Government consider offering the new Government any technical assistance that they may wish from this country, especially on matters of internal security and counter-insurgency?

Mr. Renton: I listened carefully to my right hon. Friend's question. I shall pass on his comments about assistance with internal security. He knows that we have a small technical co-operation programme. Last year it was worth about £250,000. However, we stand ready to discuss our assistance programme with the new Government of President Aquino.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Although my right hon. and hon. Friends and I fully endorse the Minister's congratulations to President Aquino and will encourage her in her attempts to build up a Government of reconciliation, would it not have been better if this note of congratulation had been sounded yesterday by the Prime Minister? She seemed to indicate that she was waiting for the OK from Mr. Shultz before recognising what had happened in the Philippines. Does the Minister agree that Mrs. Aquino has a difficult but essential task to perform in restoring the civil liberties that were taken away under the Marcos regime and in releasing political prisoners? Will she receive this Government's encouragement in restoring those basic rights to the people of the Philippines? Does the Minister realise that the relief and self-congratulation in Washington must be tinged with the

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

realisation that the United States was rather slow to recognise how discredited the Marcos regime had become and that it very nearly finished up on the wrong side?

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his earlier remarks. However, his statement that the Prime Minister might have been slow in congratulating President Aquino takes no cognisance at all of the fact that, until yesterday afternoon, the situation in Manila was extremely confused. It was quite clear that neither we nor any other sensible Western Government wished to say something which could add to the confusion or which could lead to the possibility of greater loss of life and greater bloodshed in Manila. I said earlier that the Prime Minister is sending a congratulatory message to President Aquino. We have long been concerned about the abuse of human rights in the Philippines. We are confident that President Aquino will give priority to doing all she can to achieving a rapid improvement in human rights. We shall be watching events. If she does this, it will be closely in line with the ideals that she has mentioned and upon which she stood in the recent election campaign.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my hon. Friend aware that I hold him and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in great esteem? But was it really necessary to have a statement today on the Philippines? Are there any British interests there? Do we have any power or influence to guard there? Are we to have a debate every time that there is a change of Government far away from here?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his esteem. Esteem is welcome, from whatever quarter it comes, but it is particularly pleasant when it comes from such an old friend as he. The United Kingdom has, and has long had, a valuable and important relationship with the Philippines. Our relations are long standing. Last year we exported to the Philippines about £100 million-worth of goods and we imported about £170 million-worth of goods. It is a very important country within the framework of the Association of the South East Asian Nations. In recognition of this triumph of the ballot box and of democracy in Manila during the last few days, I hope that my hon. Friend will feel that perhaps a brief statement was worth while.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Minister congratulate the people of the Philippines who played such a noble role in this transition while others were sitting on the fence? Will he particularly endorse the actions of those Filipinos who placed their bodies between the contending military groups? Finally, will he accept that that bravery perhaps prevented the Americans from making their greatest foreign affairs mistake in Asia since Vietnam?

Mr. Renton: I fully endorse what the hon. Gentleman, who has a great deal of experience in foreign affairs, says about the bravery of the Filipino people. However, I do not agree with his closing remarks about the United States. Unless 10,000 people had interposed themselves literally between the tanks and Camps Aguinaldo and Crame, it is clear that the results might have been very different indeed. The people who did this are indeed to be congratulated upon their bravery and upon their commitment to democracy.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): While warmly endorsing my hon. Friend's support of President Aquino's welcome new Government in the Philippines, does he have any evidence of possible Russian subversion in the delicate weeks that lie ahead for that country?

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. I do not have any evidence of Russian subversion, but the Soviet Union appears to have been the only country to congratulate Mr. Marcos on his election victory. It must be wondering if it did the right thing.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): Before too much credit is given to the United States, would the Minister not agree that the United States has been propping up this brutal, corrupt regime for the past 20 years, just as it has propped up the Duvalier regime in similar circumstances? When the Minister gets close to United States policy makers, will he tell them quite clearly that it is too late when they fly the tinpot dictators out when the game is up, and that in future could they make recommendations to regimes which are a little less disreputable?

Mr. Renton: I listened carefully to what the hon. Gentleman said. I think that he will recognise that the United States has long and traditional historic links with the Philippines. It has strategic links there, and the existence of those links has always put it in a particularly committed and prominent position. I think that today we should congratulate the United States on the part it has played in recent days in encouraging the restoration of democracy and helping President Aquino to the position that she now holds.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Before we all get carried away by euphoria over the events in the Philipines, would it not be as well to remember that Mrs. Aquino was not even the winning candidate in the recent fraudulent elections? Therefore, has my hon. Friend any knowledge as to when free elections may be held in the Philippines which will give some legitimacy to the Administration which has now been taken over, quite unconstitutionally, by Mrs. Aquino?

Mr. Renton: I have listened to what my hon. Friend says but I think that above all that is a matter for the Filipino people to decide. The impression I have, from the decisions taken in Manila last night, is that they are quite confident that they now have a legitimate Government and one they wish to support.

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): Is the Minister aware that the Government's message of good wishes to Mrs. Aquino and her colleagues accurately reflects the views of the overwhelming majority of people in this country? In view of the very real economic problems which will be faced by the new Administration in Manila, will the Government actively and sympathetically support any request which the Philippines Government make for a rescheduling of their international debt?

Mr. Renton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his opening remark and I am certain that it accurately reflects overwhelming opinion in the House and in the country. We have fully supported the package of assistance of 615 million special drawing rights which the International Monetary Fund is providing for the Philippines. However, I recognise what he says. Although this is a fundamentally rich agricultural country, it has no great natural mineral wealth on which to rely. I am sure that the international

community, including ourselves, will now look forward to a beneficial relationship between ourselves and the Government of the Philippines.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Will my hon. Friend confirm that it will be the policy of the Government to maintain and, if possible, increase trading links with the Philippines in the future?

Mr. Renton: Yes, Sir. That is one of the things that I hope we would be discussing in the context of the European Community and ASEAN meetings, and in bilateral meetings.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Since Ministers now hold Mrs. Aquino in such high regard, would they ask her advice on two matters? Does she think it right that in the Pacific basin our French partners should continue their testing of nuclear weapons at Mururoa atoll? Is that what she wants? Secondly, a bit nearer home, what are Mrs. Aquino's views on the naval exercises called RIMPAC and, in particular, the taking of British nuclear weapons to the Pacific against the wishes of the New Zealanders? Does the Philippines want to see our ships with nuclear weapons on those exercises in the Pacific?

Mr. Renton: I point out that Mrs. Aquino has been President only for some 20 hours, and neither I nor any other Ministers have yet had time to discuss her views on nuclear testing on Mururoa atoll or naval exercises in the Pacific. Let there be parity of abuse. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the Soviet Union has its own base nearby, in Vietnam, at Cam-Ranh bay, and this is also a fairly important strategic factor, about which the new Philippines Government will be well aware.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): I reiterate my appreciation of the efforts of diplomats both in Manila and this country on behalf of our citizens who have been in Manila in the past few weeks. As my hon. Friend is aware, I have a personal association with this problem. However, I also draw his attention to trade and the need to get alongside the new Government as quickly as possible, given the fact that the Philippines has the largest British aircraft fleet of any airline in the world, including British Airways.

Mr. Renton: I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks. I am aware of his family interests in the situation in Manila and I am grateful for his kind comments, particularly those about Foreign Office staff in Manila, who have done their best to give advice to British citizens throughout the Philippines in the past difficult few days. I take on board his point about trade. The Philippines is an important potential trading partner for us. I note what my hon. Friend says about the aircraft fleet and I hope that we shall be able to discuss this a great deal in dialogue with the new Government.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the single most important thing is for democracy in the Philippines to become firmly established, and to that end will he see what can be done to foster cultural and other interchanges between the Philippines and Hong Kong?

Mr. Renton: That is an interesting point. There is a traditional relationship between the Philippines and Hong Kong, and I shall see that the hon. Gentleman's points are brought to the notice of officials in the Hong Kong Government.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am pleased that there has been such a swift and bloodless changeover in the leadership in the Philippines. However, will my hon. Friend resist any temptation to grant political asylum to any of the 18 diplomats from the Philippines residing in the United Kingdom who might be supporting Marcos and who might become a burden on our state?

Mr. Renton: I note what my hon. Friend says. Some of the diplomats in the Philippines embassy in London declared firmly and bravely their support for Mrs. Aquino on Sunday when the dice had by no means been thrown in a certain direction. I bear in mind what he said about asylum.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Minister aware that Labour Members strongly suspect that if the United States had not given support to the new regime, we should not have had the statement today? Is it not time that we told the United States, our good friends and allies, that they should stop supporting many other tyrannical regimes, certainly in places such as Chile and Guatemala, and that it would be better for the western world and western democracy that the Marcos-type regimes did not exist?

Mr. Renton: I am saddened by the hon. Gentleman's somewhat twisted approach to this success of democracy and the ballot box in Manila. I remind him of something that Mr. Shultz said yesterday when he was speaking about the new President in the Philippines. He said that that was not something that the United States had done but something that the Filipino people had done. We should bear that in mind.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my hon. Friend share my concern at the possible precedent that we may be setting in elections being held in a far-off country, someone crying foul, the election result being overturned and us welcoming a result that has not come from the election? Does he recall whether any statements were made in the House in 1960 at the time when the presidential elections in the United States were cast in some doubt after the activities in Cook county?

Mr. Renton: No, Sir, I do not recall that. I wondered for a moment, knowing my hon. Friend's interest, whether, once he had started to talk about elections, he would lead into the elections for the European Parliament, and that that was going to be the twist to his question. I was fortunate to receive first-hand accounts of the conduct of the elections, from Lord Mackie and the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), both of whom had been observers, soon after they returned to the United Kingdom. It was clear from what they said that they had no doubt—nor did the other observers—that massive fraud had been taking place during the election. It is against that background that we can firmly welcome the new Government as democratic representatives of the Filipino people.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): While welcoming President Aquino's offer of amnesty for political prisoners, will Her Majesty's Government impress upon President Aquino the need for an early dialogue with the political parties which were banned by President Marcos, in particular the National Democratic Front, the Communist Party of the Philppines and the New People's Army? After hearing the statement by the Vice-President

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

this morning that he expects most Communist guerrillas to lay down their arms and come home, does the Minister think that that will come to pass if the land which was stolen from the guerrillas, the loss of which led them to become guerrillas, is not returned to them?

Mr. Renton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the reports of a general amnesty are encouraging and that very much lies within the character of President Aquino and the remarks that she made in the election campaign. However, with regard to his specific points about the Communist party, we shall have to wait and see what developments take place in the coming days.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The Minister said earlier that it has long been the British Government's policy to be critical of the human rights record under ex-President Marcos. Is not one of the lessons to be learned from the series of events in the Philippines that it is all very well for the Government to have a critical policy about human rights records but that if that policy is not expressed publicly and clearly we are in effect giving tacit support to dicatators? Should we not now review the Government's stand on human rights and urge the Minister to consider being much more public in his condemnation of breaches of human rights wherever they occur?

Mr. Renton: I have listened to what the hon. Gentleman has said and I understand his deep concern on this issue, which is shared by many hon. Members. I said earlier, and this is correct, that the Government have long been concerned about the abuse of human rights in the Philippines. In all seriousness, however, the hon. Gentleman must stand back and consider how any Government can most efficiently and efficaciously press their case to help political prisoners or other detainees.

The case immediately comes to mind of the many detainees and political prisoners in the Soviet Union. Those cases are often advanced by Oppositon Members for reasons that I well understand. We must always form a balance of judgment as to whether we can more efficiently help people to be released by acting quietly in talks with visiting Ministers and through our Ministers' visits to Moscow or whether we can get people released by more public outcry and by shouting from the rooftops.

It is a matter of judgment, but I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I and other Ministers at the Foreign Office regularly bear in mind and consider how best to proceed to help political prisoners.

Official Report (Standing Committee Proceedings)

3.58 pm

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am very grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to raise this point of order as I think it will be of great assistance to the House and its proceedings.

The Public Order Bill is in Committee at present, but we are still awaiting some of the *Hansard* reports for last Thursday. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, most Committees are behind in the production of the records of their proceedings. I raise this point in connection with the future business of the House as I believe that the proceedings of Committees will be further delayed if action is not taken. I notice on page 334 of the *Votes and Proceedings* that notification of the First Reading of the Shops Bill [*Lords*] has been laid on the Table, and that page 1954 of the Order Paper shows that Second Reading of the Bill is to come before the House.

You will understand, Mr. Speaker, that these Bills will create further pressure on Committees and on the *Official Report*.

As we had a statement from the Minister of State, Home Office on Monday, in which he declared that 310 letters were recorded for and 37,370 letters were recorded against the Shops Bill, can you intervene, Mr. Speaker, to persuade the Government to block the Bill altogether and save the time of the House?

Mr. Speaker: That is patently not a matter for me. If the hon. Gentleman so wishes, and if he catches my eye, he should direct questions on that matter to the Leader of the House on business questions.

Severe Weather Payments

3.59 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need to provide adequate heating assistance for pensioners and others on very small incomes in view of the continuing exceptionally severe weather in all parts of the country."

I hope that you, Mr. Speaker, will now accept that the matter is sufficiently urgent and important to meet the criteria laid down in the Standing Order.

The matter is specific because of the continuing very severe weather in all parts of the country, yet in many areas exceptionally severe weather payments have not yet been authorised. Indeed, I think it is true to say that in most parts of the country that payment is still not being made. That is surely unjustified.

I emphasise that a large number of elderly people with very small incomes do not qualify for supplementary benefit and thus receive not a penny from the DHSS to help with their heating bills. I submit that that group could well be most at risk during the present freezing weather.

The matter is important because of the reports coming in from welfare agencies about the tremendous difficulties facing the elderly at this time. Casualties and tragedies have already occurred. For example, it is reported today that a 79-year-old pensioner was found dying of cold in her freezing flat in High Wycombe—the constituency of a DHSS Minister, whose office I notified that I intended to raise the matter—and others, too, have died as a result of the freezing weather.

The director of the Family Policy Studies Centre and author of a book entitled "Old and Cold" estimates that 10 people per day are dying from hypothermia and several hundred from other cold-related conditions. Help the Aged, the organisation concerned with the welfare of the elderly, has also stated that it fears a big increase in the number of old people who will die during this period.

The matter is therefore extremely important and urgent, so I make no apology for the fact that I raised the matter under Standing Order No. 10 not long ago and that the present application is made on the day following the unsuccessful application made by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). I believe that it is our duty and responsibility to see that the problem facing so many people in the community, especially the elderly, who simply do not have enough money to keep themselves warm, should be raised here in the House of Commons. The time has come for a debate to take place.

Speaking frankly and honestly, Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand why no debate has yet taken place. During this period of freezing weather, described by my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West yesterday as the coldest February for years, it is essential that we have the opportunity to debate this subject. I plead with you, Mr. Speaker, to allow this application so that tomorrow we can have the debate which my hon. Friends and I have been seeking. We can then raise these matters and try to persuade the Government to allow far more money for those so desperately in need of assistance. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the need to provide adequate heating assistance for pensioners and others on very small incomes in view of the continuing exceptionally severe weather in all parts of the country."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, and as I mentioned to him yesterday — *[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will pay attention while I am speaking to him — having listened carefully to his submission and to what was said yesterday, it is my sole duty in considering these applications to decide whether the matter should be given priority over the Orders of the Day set down for today or tomorrow. I regret that I cannot find that the matter raised by the hon. Gentleman meets all the criteria laid down in the Standing Order. I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Later—

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know no one in the Gallery and certainly not the person——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We never refer to what goes on in the Gallery. Does the hon. Gentleman wish to raise another matter?

Mr. Winnick: If someone elsewhere is not aware of our habits and regulations, could you take steps to ensure that that person is allowed to go back to where he was?

Mr. Speaker: We never take notice of what goes on in the Gallery.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 14 MARCH

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Steve Norris
Sir Bernard Braine
Mr. Tony Favell

Noise Abatement

4.5 pm

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to compel employers to provide adequate protection for employees and the public by reducing sound levels at work and by preventing exposure to harmful noise levels.

I declare an interest on two counts. First, I am sponsored by the General and Municipl, Boilermakers and Allied Trades Union, which has fought very hard over the years to ensure that its members have their hearing protected and, when it has been unsuccessful, has obtained substantial compensation for its members. Secondly, having worked in the shipbuilding industry for a considerable time, I suffer from industrial deafness.

I have no doubt that you, Mr. Speaker, will agree that sometimes not being able to hear everything in this Chamber has advantages as well as disadvantages, but noise-damaged workers pay for their employers' neglect by social isolation, friction with friends and family in appearing not to listen, putting the television or wireless on too loudly, and so on. They also suffer from ringing in the ears and head as well as from other stress problems. There is greater potential for accidents and loss of pleasure through failing to hear music or even birds singing.

Being deaf is not funny. Any Member who thinks that it is should try spending a weekend with earplugs in his ears and see how comfortable it is. That is what those suffering from industrial deafness have to endure all the time. If noise levels at work were reduced from 100 decibels to 90 decibels, 21 workers in 100 would be saved from severe hearing loss because only 11 instead of 32 in 100 would be damaged by exposure to that level over the years. If the level were reduced to 80 decibels there would be a further saving of eight workers in 100 because only three in 100 would suffer at that level. Employers also pay through reduced productivity, higher accident rates, more absenteeism, compensation claims and poorer industrial relations.

Manufacturers and designers of noisy equipment may suffer loss of markets because many countries now insist on quieter machinery. Indeed, many United Kingdom manufacturers already supply quieter machines for export and noisier ones for the home market.

Some employers have made improvements, but many have done nothing at all. Many talk about the cost of reducing noise levels, but the cost would not be so great and in many cases there need be no cost at all. For example, noise control for tractor cabs costs less than 2·5 per cent. of the cost of a new tractor. The new, quiet road drills cost the same and in some cases less than the noisy ones. Improvements can therefore be made at a cost of hundreds, not thousands, of pounds.

Not long ago the Minister sent out secret instructions to the health and safety inspectors which said:

"Where engineering controls are considered reasonably practicable, but the employer has opted for the provision of ear protection, further enforcement action should not be considered . . . provided the protection is effective and worn in noisy areas at all times."

This is a blatant example of failure to enforce the law properly. It contradicts the 1972 code of practice, the spirit of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the policy of the Health and Safety Executive. That instruction condones employers who have broken the law. It is reminiscent of the infamous Home Office instruction to inspectors in the last century, which asked them not to enforce the then law on fencing dangerous machinery above 7 ft from the ground. That instruction was based on the spurious belief that there was no danger once the minimum safety precautions had been taken. It was the result of pressure from what Dickens called "The society for the mangling of operatives" and, because of the many fatal accidents that had occurred near drive belts many feet from the factory floor, that instruction was withdrawn several years later.

Do we have to wait for several thousand more workers to become deaf before the present instruction to the health and safety officers is withdrawn? According to the Trade Union Studies Information Centre, which is based in Newcastle, there are 45,000 people in the Tyne and Wear area waiting for hearing tests. It is believed that it takes on average 49 weeks for a person to have a hearing test.

The present control limit of 90 decibels is unacceptable because it will allow 11 per cent. of exposed workers to suffer a severe health handicap—a 50 decibel hearing loss. That is accepted by the DHSS as a reason for a disability pension. An example for hon. Members of a 85 decibel noise level is being in a train going through a tunnel. Workers have to work in those levels for up to eight and a half hours a day. I accept that, because of the employers' and Government's neglect of noise control and hearing protection over the past 50 years, the economic cost of saving all but 1 per cent. of exposed workers—which a limit of 75 decibels would do—is a task that is too large and would take a number of years to achieve. My Bill proposes a threshold of acceptable harm of 80 decibels and a duty to reduce noise levels above that limit to as low as is reasonably practicable.

There should be an upper limit for impulse noise and a ceiling of noise beats peaks of 115 decibels. Employers should have a legal duty to reduce future noise levels from machinery, processors or work systems, when they are creating new work. Noise surveys should be carried out every two years by competent persons in consultation with safety representatives. Reports should be made available to those safety representatives. However, hearing protectors should be a temporary last resort and part of a timed programme of noise reduction. There should be a duty on the designers of machinery to reduce noise levels to the lowest practicable level and in any case to 85 decibels by 1987.

There are over 3 million workers in the manufacturing industry, construction, agriculture, forestry, mining and quarrying, who are exposed to noise levels above 80 decibels. That is why occupational deafness is the most widespread industrial disease and over a quarter of a million people in Britain suffer from this severe health handicap. Fifty years ago the Newcastle-based leader of the boilermakers' union, Jack Hill, took this issue up on behalf of the TUC. I hope that this year, Industry Year, something will be done to rid industry of the scourge of industrial deafness.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Don Dixon, Miss Betty Boothroyd, Mr. Robert C. Brown, Mr. Jack Ashley, Mr. Giles Radice, Dr. John Cunningham, Mr. George Robertson, Mr. Michael Cocks, Mr. A. E. P. Duffy, Mr. Laurie Pavitt and Mr. Frank Cook.

NOISE ABATEMENT

Mr. Don Dixon accordingly presented a Bill to compel employers to provide adequate protection for employees and the public by reducing sound levels at work and by preventing exposure to harmful noise levels: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 May and to be printed. [Bill 96.]

Royal Air Force

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

4.14 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Norman Lamont): I am delighted to have the opportunity to open this debate on the Royal Air Force, a service which occupies a key place in British defence policy. Its role in United Kingdom air defence is central not only to this country, but to NATO's ability to withstand any Warsaw pact attack on western Europe. The crucial place of United Kingdom air forces is illustrated by the fact that the Commander-in-Chief of RAF Strike Command occupies an important senior post in the NATO command structure.

In the central region, too, Royal Air Force Germany plays a vital role in support of our ground forces in the land battle — strike-attack, close air support and reconnaissance. The RAF is also vital for out-of-area commitments. The defence of the Falklands and the airbridge to the islands is only the best known of a range of activities which require men and machines of great diversity and first-rate quality.

Perhaps I could briefly remind the House of the great improvements in Soviet capability which are currently taking place. The Fulcrum agile, all-weather fighter-interceptor is coming into service. It is similar to the F-18, a very advanced and formidable aircraft. The Flanker air superiority fighter, which is similar to the F-15, is also nearing deployment. They are supported, and their effectiveness increased, by the new Soviet airborne early warning aircraft. A cruise missile carrying variant of the Bear bomber is now in production.

This list is by no means exhaustive but it illustrates the considerable improvements in quality which the Soviet forces are steadily achieving. These improvements are to forces which substantially outnumber those of the NATO Alliance. The Warsaw pact deploys some 2,700 fixed wing tactical aircraft on the central front to NATO's 1,300. The Warsaw pact production rate of aircraft is at a ratio of 1·4:1 against that of NATO. Against that background it has been this Government's policy to carry through a major re-equipment programme for the RAF, making it one of the most sophisticated air forces in NATO.

The RAF share of the defence equipment budget is some 36 per cent. in the current year. That is a share of a defence equipment budget which has grown from 39 to 46 per cent. of the entire defence budget since 1979. That defence budget is about one fifth larger in real terms than when we entered office. These figures are the measure of the extra resources that we have been able to devote to the re-equipment of the RAF. It is a capital-intensive service and takes a large part of the equipment budget, and for that reason the majority of my speech will be about equipment.

By any standards, a major milestone in the continued progress of this re-equipment programme occurred last year when the national armament directors of the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and Spain signed the Turin agreement to proceed collaboratively with the new European fighter aircraft. Following on from the success of Tornado, EFA was in fact the logical next step in terms of European collaboration. The United Kingdom will need a new agile combat aircraft to replace its Phantom and Jaguar aircraft from the mid-1990s. Other European

[Mr. Norman Lamont]

countries have a similar need in the same timescale. It is one thing to perceive a need and an opportunity, another to turn that into a collaborative programme. By his initiative and energy my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) gave impetus to this project and, despite great difficulty in reaching a consensus on requirements, secured its launch: a tremendous political achievement.

Work on the project is proceeding well. The industries of the four countries started on the project definition stage last September shortly after the national armament directors reached agreement on the technical and organisational basis of the project definition study. One of the major technical characteristics relates to aircraft weight, about which there has recently been considerable press comment. I confirm that it has always been, and remains, our firm intention that aircraft design shall respect the characteristics which were agreed last summer in Turin. I welcome this opportunity to make that position clear.

It would be wrong to imply that the task that has been set for EFA is easy. The definition and design of such an aircraft, incorporating state-of-the-art technology, is inevitably a challenging process. There is clearly much to be done during the coming months before the industrial reports are submitted to the four Governments for appraisal later this year. But we are fortunate to have the firm technical foundation of the Tornado partnership to work on. Moreover, we have the political and industrial resolve to follow up the success of that programme with an even more ambitious and exciting one.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): Does my hon. Friend recognise that there is a difference between the European staff target and the European staff requirement? One was 9·75 tonnes and the other was 12·5 tonnes. The difference must be resolved quickly.

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and my remarks were directed exactly at that point. I want to make it clear that we wish to stick rigorously to the Turin agreement. We got the project together with enormous political effort, and it cannot become unstitched by the industries in different countries adding to the aircraft, gold-plating it, and making it more elaborate. We must keep to the agreement.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): It is worrying that it is not only manufacturers but air forces that change aircraft requirements. The Minister must face those factors in future. Will he give a categorical assertion that he will not allow air forces or manufacturers to change the specifications?

Mr. Lamont: I have already done that. The hon. Gentleman is correct. We wish to stick to the Turin agreement, but that is not an easy technical task. That is our objective. We want to keep the project together, and we do not want people constantly altering the requirements.

The Government regret that France was unable to join the programme, since a five-nation project would have been an even greater achievement for European aerospace. Both France and the United States have subsequently broached the possibility of collaboration at the component level between EFA and their own projects. Obviously, we are looking carefully at that possibility.

Another major equipment highlight of the past year was the sale of Tornado and Hawk aircraft to Saudi Arabia in a deal worth more than £5 billion—our biggest ever single overseas sale.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way in a minute.

There has been some speculation that this is the biggest ever overseas defence sale by any country. By any standard it was a great achievement, sustaining some 9,000 jobs in the United Kingdom industry. Last week a memorandum of understanding and contracts for the aircraft and initial spares and support were signed, and the first aircraft will be delivered at the end of March, only six months after the inception of the project. The first cash payment from the Saudi Government has been received.

That is major defence sales news in its own right. I mention it in the context of my remarks about Royal Air Force equipment for three reasons. First, to acknowledge that there will be a need to support the sale in its early stages through diverting from the production line equipment, including 18 Tornado GR 1s, which would otherwise have been delivered to the Royal Air Force. Our aim will be to minimise the impact on the Royal Air Forces front line. I am pleased to confirm that, through agreement reached with British Aerospace, all equipment so diverted will be replaced at no cost to the defence budget. Secondly, such sales can only be good for the Royal Air Force, in that longer production runs and a wider range of markets will spread overhead costs and help to contain unit prices. In assisting the Saudi deal we are helping not only British industry but also ourselves. Thirdly, this important sale, in the face of fierce competition, to a demanding customer surely testifies to the quality of this superb aircraft whose deployment of which to Royal Air Force service the Government are bringing to fruition.

Defence exports are sometimes criticised, but the Tornado sale illustrates the substantial benefits that come from a responsible policy of vigorously promoting defence exports. It is surely right that we assist our allies in their legitimate right to pursue their self defence. Then there are the economic benefits to the United Kingdom in terms of foreign exchange earned and jobs created. As my hon. Friends know, some 120,000 jobs are secured by defence exports.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Will my hon. Friend confirm that the sale of Harrier jump jets, following their remarkable performance in the Falklands campaign, has been disappointing? What more can the Government do to help with that?

Mr. Lamont: It is true that following the Falklands the export of Harriers has been surprisingly disappointing. There are some prospects for it. The collaborative programme with the United States' marine corps is a huge project. It is tremendously to the credit of British Aerospace that such a project should be secured in collaboration with the United Kingdom. There deserve to be other export orders, and we hope that they will materialise. I assure my hon. Friend that the Government will do everything possible to assist such sales.

All those considerations and the interventions today make an unassailable case for the energetic policy of assisting defence exports which the Government have pursued. We have enjoyed some notable defence sales successes recently, and we intend to continue that policy vigorously.

I should now like to deal with the RAF's Tornado programme. It forms the basis of the re-equipment programme. We now have in service nine squadrons, the last of which formed in May 1985, of the strike-attack variant, the GR 1. With their terrain-following radar, those aircraft can penetrate enemy air defence at low level and high speed, and can deliver weapons accurately. They can operate at long ranges, which can be further extended by air-to-air refuelling.

Negotiations are also in progress for the purchase of nine additional Tornado GR 1 aircraft for the RAF. The aircraft are required to help offset expected attrition losses. Orders have been placed for long-lead items but the timing of the main production effort is being reassessed in the light of Tornado export orders.

The aircraft has an extensive fit of armaments, including the JP 233 cratering and area denial weapon. The weapon combines an ability to hit and crater runways with devastating effect, with an ability to scatter great numbers of mines, thus rendering enormously difficult and dangerous the work of the repair crews. We did not have the advantage of that weapon in the Falklands.

All in all, the Tornado GR 1 is an extremely capable aircraft. That capability was most effectively underlined when Tornados of no. 27 squadron, supported by Victor tankers of no. 57 squadron, took part in the 1985 strategic air command bombing competition. It is a most prestigious military competition, and I am delighted to say that for the second year in succession our crews achieved outstanding results. Against the best crews and aircraft in the United States Air Force, this clearly demonstrates the exceptional operational capability of the Tornado and the excellence of its crews.

We are of course not neglecting the opportunities that exist for further improving the capabilities of the aircraft. Together with our collaborative partners, we are studying options for a mid-life improvement package to enable the Tornado to continue to meet the evolving threat through the 1990s and beyond. The F-2, or air defence variant, represents the most significant airborne element of our major programme to improve the air defence of the United Kingdom. Fourteen of these aircraft have been delivered to RAF Coningsby. The first operational squadron will form next year. The aircraft has a formidable range which can be extended by air-to-air refuelling. As some of my hon. Friends know, there have been problems in the development of the radar, which have entailed adjustments to the build up of the ADV force to its planned total of seven squadrons. I am happy to say that these problems are now largely overcome.

Another major step in the equipment programme was taken when the two Harrier GR5 prototypes flew for the first time during 1985. This is another major collaborative aircraft programme on which we are engaged. The GR5 will greatly increase the offensive support capability of the RAF when it enters squadron service in 1988. Because the GR5 has the same name and operational role as its predecessor, the GR3, it is not always appreciated that it is a very different aircraft with considerably greater range and payload. We are at an advanced stage of negotiations with the United States to extend the collaborative programme in order to give the GR5 and its American counterpart, the AV8B, a full capability to operate at night and in poor visibility.

A vital part of our air defence and an important role for the RAF's out-of-area commitments is our air-to-air refuelling fleet. Our major plans to modernise this force will be completed this year. The tanker force performed well during and immediately after the Falklands campaign but the existing elderly Victor aircraft are to be replaced by a mixed force of VC10s and TriStars. One Victor squadron will disband at the end of June, while the other continues in service. The conversion of a squadron of nine VC10 aircraft to the tanker role is almost complete. We have also bought nine TriStar aircraft which will have the flexibility to perform a variety of roles, including the carriage of passengers and freight as well as refuelling.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What is the cost of nine TriStars?

Mr. Lamont: Off hand, I am unable to give that figure to the hon. Gentleman, but I will make sure he is supplied with the information.

The new VC10 and TriStar tankers will greatly increase the amount of fuel our tankers can dispense to front-line aircraft. TriStar, in particular, can offload, airframe for airframe, about two and a half times as much fuel as the older tankers it is replacing. In war this would allow more operational aircraft to extend their radius of action and in that sense they would act as a force multiplier, greatly increasing the effectiveness of our own front-line forces. That is a good example of the Government's determination to make better and more effective use of defence resources.

Mention has been made in previous debates of operation Swift Sword, the out-of-area training exercise in Oman to be held in late November. That will demonstrate, among other things, the value of this investment in terms of our strategic mobility and capability for rapid military deployment. Swift Sword will involve the use of the TriStar fleet, the VC10s and Hercules aircraft of the air transport force, and will also include six Tornado aircraft. About 5,000 personnel from all three services will participate in this exercise which will last for three weeks.

A major part of last year's debate on the RAF was also about the selection of a new basic trainer for the RAF which is required to replace the Jet Provost. My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State announced the selection of the Shorts Tucano for which an order for 130 aircraft has been placed. In general, the programme is going well, although the build-up has been less quick than we had hoped. Shorts has advised us that there will be a few months delay in the delivery of the first aircraft, but it is hoped to recover some of the slippage later. Because the price of the contract is fixed, the delay will not result in any cost increase to the Ministry of Defence. A prototype Tucano fitted with the Garrett engine flew for the first time in February.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will there be any additional operating costs for the RAF as a result of using the Jet Provost for an extended life? Will there be no greater fuel consumption?

Mr. Lamont: An increase in cost is not expected.

I should now like to deal with the Nimrod airborne early warning project. The House will recall that in March 1977

[Mr. Lamont]

the then Government announced their decision to proceed with the Nimrod system to replace the Shackleton in the airborne early warning role. Contracts were placed with what is now British Aerospace plc for the necessary work on the Nimrod airframe, and with GEC Avionics Limited for the development and production of its mission system avionics. At that time it was envisaged that the aircraft would enter service with the Royal Air Force in April 1984. Since 1977, work has been proceeding on the project which will be an important component of the United Kingdom's air defence capability and our contribution to the NATO mixed AEW force.

British Aerospace's work on the airframe is proceeding satisfactorily. However, as the House is well aware, serious difficulties have arisen in the development of the avionics system and that has led to significant time and cost overruns. Given these difficulties, the Government have concluded that it would be right to consider all of the available options, both from this country and from overseas, for meeting the RAF's needs before taking a final decision on the way forward. We must ensure value for money on this project as elsewhere in the defence programme. GEC has fully accepted the Government's view that this evaluation is now necessary.

The Government also believe that the project management and contractual arrangements for the Nimrod AEW programme, which were established in 1977, have clearly not provided a satisfactory basis for the timely completion of the project and that it can go forward only on a revised basis. We discussed with the company arrangements for sharing the risk and providing adequate incentive for completion. I am pleased to inform the House that these negotiations have been satisfactorily concluded. We have reached agreement both on arrangements to cover the interim period while all of the options, including, of course, Nimrod AEW, are fully evaluated, and on a possible basis for the longer term should we proceed to completion with the Nimrod project.

During the next six months, GEC Avionics will press ahead with the Nimrod development programme but on a revised contractual basis under which that company and the Government will bear 50 per cent. of the costs properly incurred within a maximum financial limit for the programme of £50 million. Before the end of this period GEC Avionics will provide us with a firm price proposal against a technical specification aimed at fulfilling the needs of the Royal Air Force. The company will also demonstrate to the Ministry the progress it has made on the development of the project. During this period we shall explore with other contractors at home and abroad alternatives to the Nimrod AEW approach and their technical, cost, industrial, and other implications. We shall also consult the NATO authorities.

Following this six-month period, the Government will reach a decision on the way forward. Should we then decide to accept a GEC Avionics proposal and to continue with the Nimrod AEW project, the contract will be extended within an agreed firm price and period for completion and with funding to continue on the basis of equal shares. Once the work had been completed satisfactorily to time, the funding borne by the company would of course be paid in full. In the event that completion were to be delayed beyond the agreed period, the company has agreed that it would bear the cost of the programme until it was satisfactorily completed. Those arrangements would then provide for the company to be paid in full for work completed satisfactorily to time and for the company to bear the consequences should this not happen. They would, I believe, be fair to the company and fair to the taxpayer.

The Government are anxious to give the company the chance to demonstrate that it can complete the project satisfactorily. The company has now shown its commitment to, and confidence in, its ability to do this. It has also recognised—I pay tribute to it for this—the need to show that its solution is competitive with the alternatives that are on offer. The Government have sought in the negotiations to give it every opportunity to recover a most unsatisfactory position which reflects, in part, wider shortcomings in the management of defence procurement. That too must be vigorously tackled.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my hon. Friend make two important clarifications to his carefully worded statement? First, what are the interim operational provisions for airborne early warning, which is such a critical part of an overall national air defence system? Will he lease E3A Sentry aircraft from the United States air force or enter into some operational collaboration with our allies? Secondly, will he assure the House that the operational requirement of the Royal Air Force will be the paramount criterion and that the equipment selected at the end of the day will be that which best meets the operational requirement?

Mr. Lamont: This is a serious matter for the air defence of the United Kingdom and I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that the defence needs of the United Kingdom must be paramount in our minds. My hon. Friend will be aware that we revised the staff requirement downward to a minimum operating capability. That is what we have discussed in the recent past with the company. We shall be making available to the company —GEC—and to all the other people who may wish to tender for the remainder of the programme the cardinal points of the original staff requirement, because obviously it is not enough to draw a line at the minimum operating capability. We must look at the future developments. We must look at the staff requirement in the longer term as well.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): First, may I say on behalf of my many constituents who work at British Aerospace, Woodford, how much my hon. Friend's comment will be appreciated on the way in which British Aerospace, Woodford, has performed throughout the contract? Secondly, may I draw his attention to the fact that GEC has been negotiating for some time with Lockheed on a joint project for the installation of its aviation system in a Hercules aircraft? Will the nation reap any rewards if that is a success?

Mr. Lamont: If that sale goes ahead it will obviously be of benefit to the nation and to the country. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he said. We are conscious of the huge amount of taxpayers' money that has been invested in the project. We are well aware of the industrial issues at stake and that the prestige of the company is very much under examination as well. We wish to give British industry every possible opportunity to satisfy the requirement, but it is also important, given the

shortcomings of the programme and our important defence requirement, that we see what is on offer elsewhere in the world.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): I am sure that my hon. Friend is aware that it is important that he should strike the positive note that he has just done. I am sure that everyone will be grateful that he has. Surely there is a key element in the next six months, which is that one of the problems throughout the project has been that the management authorisation has rested in the Ministry of Defence. Can my hon. Friend assure us that that sort of weekly authorisation, which has been at fault to a large degree, will not go on over the next six months and that the company will be properly in control of the project?

Mr. Lamont: My hon. Friend is right and it is implicit in what I have said that there will be a new contract as from next week, and GEC Avionics will be the prime contractor. That has been one of the main things wrong with the project in the past.

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe) *rose*——

Mr. Lamont: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman but I hope that the House will understand if I do not treat this as though it were a private notice question.

Mr. Duffy: This is important and we are grateful to the Minister for not merely updating us on this sorry saga but for giving us this important statement, because that is what it amounts to. However, is it not fair to say that a changing staff requirement, in the light of Britian's defence needs, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, quite properly because the development represents a quantum leap, as well as the wider ambit of defence procurement, to which the hon. Gentleman also referred, and GEC Avionics, are all responsible for this unhappy state of affairs?

Mr. Lamont: It is certainly not my wish to ascribe blame to any party, nor indeed to seek to escape blame. I am sure that this is not a project of which anyone can be proud. However, as I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), when one talks about changing staff requirements, what has happened recently is that far from the staff requirement being changed or tightened up, we moved from ASR400—the staff requirement — down to a minimum operating capability which was somewhat less demanding, but which we thought would be a useful addition to the United Kingdom's defences.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): We are told by TASS that to complete the existing work would cost £250 million and on top of that will be the air staff requirement of a further £150 million. Are those figures accurate? Will my hon. Friend clarify the figure of £50 million that he has given us?

Mr. Lamont: The figure of £50 million was the sum that applies for the next six months. The cost of reaching the staff target will be discovered when we have the propositions from the company and others. That is precisely the problem. We are not sure what it will cost and we are not sure precisely what can be achieved. That is what we wish to find out and that is what we wish to give British industry the opportunity to demonstrate.

Having been in the frying pan of Nimrod, may I now turn to the subject of Westland? On that I would simply say that I am sure that all concerned for the wellbeing of Westland will be pleased that final decisions have been made by the shareholders. The Government have already made it clear that if the Sikorsky-Fiat package was selected, we would continue to support the company in existing and future European collaborative projects. That choice has now been made and I am happy to restate the Government's commitment, and to say that we shall resist any attempt to discriminate against Westland.

On support helicopters, as I have made clear to the House on previous occasions, the defence staff needs to look again at the concept of air mobile operations and at the size and mix of support helicopters required to fulfil that concept. That thinking must cover the threat and technology. I well appreciate the impatience that several of my hon. Friends have, and I can assure them that I shall do everything possible to ensure that that rethink is completed as quickly as possible.

For the present the position must remain that one cannot say whether the NH 90 programme, in which we and Westland are participating at the feasibility study stage, or the Black Hawk, or any other light support helicopter, might meet our needs. The position remains the same in the medium support category, where the EH 101, which we already plan to procure for the Royal Navy, and the Chinook, might be contenders.

I should like to say a word about the recent shuttle disaster as, of course, the shuttle is extremely important for our own satellite programme. I know that I speak for the whole House when I say that everyone was extremely distressed by the accident, and we extend our deepest sympathy to the families of the shuttle crew. We cannot assess fully the consequences of the accident on the United Kingdom Skynet IV programme until the investigations of the United States authorities have been completed. Clearly, we must await firm information before deciding the way forward.

We remain confident in the shuttle programme, which has been a great technological success, and there is at present no change in plans either for the first two Skynet IV satellites to be launched via the shuttle or for the two British payload specialists to fly with the shuttle, one on each of the first two Skynet missions.

Inevitably, a large portion of my remarks has been about equipment. But equipment, however excellent, is of no avail without dedicated personnel which make up a service such as the RAF. Morale is a key element in the effectiveness of the RAF, and the maintenance of morale is of fundamental importance in the management of personnel.

The major re-equipment programmes and the restoration of pay comparability have done much, but it is recognised as equally important that living and working conditions should be maintained at a level that will continue to attract recruits and retain skilled manpower. This is demonstrated by our plans to enhance the level of modernisation and development of service domestic accommodation.

In the case of recruitment, overall, officer and airman aircrew recruitment in 1984-85 was good, although there were shortfalls in certain areas. For the current year, ground airman recruitment is going extremely well, but recruitment of officers and airman aircrew has been rather lower than hoped for. It is currently forecast at 87 per cent. of the target.

[Mr. Lamont]

The RAF, in common with the other two services, is also facing increasing competition from outside employers, particularly in areas such as engineering where there is a national shortage of specialised skills. But we are continually seeking to improve our recruitment and selection procedures to ensure that the RAF has the right number and calibre of candidates to undertake its operational commitments.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I understand that with a highly technological service such as the RAF there is now great difficulty in getting people who are properly trained to come in and do the job. This applies both to those who are in uniform and to civilians who support the service. Does not my hon. Friend think that the service itself must do something about training its own people in order to fill these gaps?

Mr. Lamont: I agree with the gist of my hon. Friend's remarks, but, as I have said, while there are problems in certain areas they are at present limited in scale and extent. We shall keep an eye on this because it is very worrying, but it is not a serious problem at present.

Retention is the key to the cost-effective use of manpower resources. Officer retention is being carefully monitored, especially in the aircrew categories. While the rate of premature voluntary retirement shows an increase, the figures are substantially less than in 1978 when there was a major exodus. The numbers applying in any one year remain comparatively small in relation to overall numbers. They are currently about only 3 per cent. of trained officer strength.

As regards airmen, retention and further service rates continue to be healthy, and we are confident of our ability to retain good, well-qualified air tradesmen both in the near future and the longer term.

The activity which, of course, brings together men and equipment and makes them into an efficient fighting service with high morale, adaptability and flexible thinking is training. We place great emphasis upon maximising the variation in training as well as the routine of practice.

I have described a service that is well-equipped, well-motivated and well-trained. Before I finish, I wish to mention briefly the role of the RAF in disaster relief. The RAF has deservedly earned the gratitude of the Governments and citizens of Mexico and Colombia, following the earthquake and volcano disasters in those countries. But perhaps the best known and major contribution to disaster relief was the continued presence in Ethiopia, carrying out "Operation Bushel". Until its withdrawal in December because of the improving transport situation, the RAF, ably supported by its Army colleagues from the Royal Corps of Transport, made a very successful and substantial contribution towards famine relief. With two Hercules aircraft based at Addis Ababa, the detachment delivered more than 32,000 tonnes of relief supplies in some 950 airdrops and 1,200 airland sorties. That is a considerable achievement, and during its stay in Ethiopia the detachment flew seven days a week for nearly 14 months. That is a remarkable achievement and a testament not only to the detachment's skills and its equipment, but also to the ground support provided in Ethiopia, Cyprus and the United Kingdom.

These and less publicised but no less arduous endeavours — such as those of the long-haul runs maintaining the supply link to the Falklands or the air defence crews always on standby alert to react to unauthorised penetrations of United Kingdom airspace— are all evidence of a service whose dedication, professionalism and skill, matched by fine equipment, may be counted one of this country's greatest assets.

4.56 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I begin by welcoming the Minister of State to his first major RAF debate. We hope that he has a longer tenure in office than is normal for Secretaries of State. This is the fourth Secretary of State for Defence that we have had —they all seem to spend about eight months in the job.

It is also welcome to have someone from the Department of Defence answering on defence matters. After its two defeats at the hand of the "Department of Trade and Deindustrialisation" on Westland and Vickers, we had come to the conclusion that the MOD was so cowed and beaten that it would never appear at the Dispatch Box again. We therefore welcome the presence of Defence Ministers.

I join the Minister in the compliments paid to the RAF for the service that it has performed during the past 14 to 16 months in Ethiopia. The Hercules crew, supported by the Army, showed tremendous effort and dedication of which we as a nation can be rightly proud. It made a significant contribution to solving some of the appalling problems that Ethiopia faced in that terrible famine. I also join the Minister in congratulating the aircrews who helped in the Mexico earthquake and Colombia volcano disasters.

We sometimes forget the work done by the helicopter crews at the time of the Indian air crash disaster. They worked hard then, and also during the recent oil rig disaster, and we should pay tribute to them.

We should also congratulate the RAF marine branch on its 68 years of service. During the Westland fiasco, it went almost unnoticed that part of the RAF had been privatised and that the marine branch is now in the hands of private industry. That was a sad day for a branch that had a distinguished and important history. It was privatised on 1 February and it would be nice to know who has taken over responsibility, how much the RAF is paying for it and whether it is beginning to work. The MOD slipped out the news at the beginning of January, and not many people seemed to notice. I listened carefully to what the Minister said about morale in the services and the retention of skilled personnel. Much as he tried to gloss over the problem, there has been a severe loss of skilled personnel during the past few years as a result of the Government's penny-wise, pound-foolish attitude.

Service chiefs refer to this exodus as the black hole. Between 1980 and 1981, 210 Royal Air Force officers left prematurely. Last year, 335 Royal Air Force officers left early and one Ministry of Defence official said:

"Indications for this year are bad"

and

"We expect continuous growth in the number of people leaving early."

The Sunday Times, in a pre-Wapping edition, says that this is a

"direct result of budget constraints that mean fewer people work longer hours for less time spent away from base."

The most disturbing figures for service men taking premature voluntary release are for Royal Air Force pilots

and navigators. It costs £2·87 million to train a fast jet pilot and £1 million to train a navigator, yet last year 147 pilots left the Royal Air Force before completion of their engagements and 89 have expressed a desire to leave prematurely. Sixty-nine navigators left last year and another 46 have asked to leave before completion of their engagements. That is 236 pilots and 115 navigators leaving prematurely in a year when only 161 pilots have graduated from flying training schools and only 53 have graduated as air navigators. That is a net loss of 75 pilots and 62 navigators in the year.

It cost nearly £1 billion to train those 115 navigators and 236 pilots, and it will cost another £1 billion to replace them provided that we can get the recruits. The Minister has already said that it is very difficult to replace them at this level. They are literally worth their weight in gold. Many of them are leaving to take up better paid jobs with civil airlines. We must therefore consider carefully how we pay our aircrews. We must also question whether civilian airlines, if they are taking aircrew who are retiring prematurely, should make some contribution to training the officers. British Airways did away with its pilot training school some time ago.

Other pilots are taking service in foreign air forces—some with the Saudis where they will in all probability fly Tornados before many of their Royal Air Force colleagues get their chance. The Government must do something to improve the conditions of service men, especially those serving in Germany, if they are to stem this flow.

We have not been given the figures for the trade groups and the non-pilot professions leaving the Royal Air Force but they seem to be in skills which are in great demand in civilian life. When the Minister talks about a severe engineering training shortage, he ought to talk to the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry and the Secretary of State for Education and Science about the cuts that they have made in those areas.

Nevertheless, the Royal Air Force will face a severe manpower shortage when the massive re-equipment programme, with much more sophisticated equipment, such as Tornado and the EFA, takes place.

I wonder whether the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State can tell us what has happened to the Royal Auxiliary Air Force helicopter squadron project to support the Territorial Army. Is it true that it has been shelved? Is it true, as one Royal Air Force source suggested, that the project was

"never . . . anything more than a political gesture"

to pressure from Tory Back Benchers?

The Minister of State expressed the feelings of, I am sure, the whole House when he spoke of the sympathy that we felt for the Americans over their loss with the shuttle service. The Opposition share that sympathy. We also share his concern about the effectiveness of the shuttle for the Skynet programme. It is obviously right to await the outcome of the United States inquiry into the loss of the shuttle. The Skynet programme is fundamental to our defences and it ought to concern us. Have we considered whether it would be possible, should it prove necessary, to put Skynet into orbit using Ariane or some other system? Perhaps the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State can tell us that when he winds up—it helps to make his speech for him.

We welcome the Department of Trade and Industry's decision to take to the proving of concept stage the HOTOL project, which obviously has important defence implications in terms of putting satellites into orbit and getting people from London to Sydney in 45 minutes or troops out when in difficulty. That might be many years in the future, but the ideas in HOTOL are exciting in general and in defence terms. We want it to be encouraged. It is a quantum leap and we would hope that it would encourage British industry to participate in the relevant technology.

It is important that the RAF will receive more of the more powerful and definitive version of the Tornado air defence fighter. Earlier Tornados were criticised for lack of engine power, so the new and better aircraft are obviously to the advantage of the RAF. The decision will obviously make Tornado much more attractive to other countries, thus adding to its excellent export success. It will help to ensure the future of jobs of workers at Warton, who are vital to our air defence base.

We must consider the Saudi order carefully. It has delayed bringing our own aircraft into service, but selling them off the shelf has overcome an embarrassing gap for the Government in the work load at Warton and maintained work until the EFA comes on line. It also helped the Secretary of State, especially the previous Secretary of State, to postpone decisions that he would otherwise have had to make about cuts in his defence programme.

When will all of the proposed Tornados enter service? Do we know? Do we have a precise date? When will they all have adequate working Foxhunter radar?

Mr. Robert Atkins: The Minister told the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McNamara: With respect, if the hon. Gentleman wants to interrupt, I shall give way. If he does not, he should not tell me what the Minister said when he did not say it. The Minister has not given a precise date for Foxhunter. He said that he felt that the majority of the snags with it had been overcome, but he has not given any date when even the Tornados already in service and those going through the conversion squadrons will be equipped with it. The House has a right to know.

It is vital for the morale of pilots and ground crew that equipment is the best available. Ground crew do not enjoy maintaining and servicing obsolete aircraft such as we have in our air defence now. What is good for the morale of our service men must be good for the defence of the country. That is the essence of what is happening with the Tornado programme. It is one thing to provide the aircraft, but they must have the correct avionics—and they do not at the moment.

I join the Minister in congratulating the Tornado crew in the Curtis Le May bombing competition. It did extremely well.

The former Secretary of State worked hard on the EFA project. Now we are in the position that it can go ahead. The House and everyone concerned with that project will be happy to hear the firm words used by the Minister of State and that there will be no mucking about with the design and project originally decided upon at Turin. It is obvious from the Turin agreement and the final decision on sophisticated aircraft that there will be some changes. However, it is important that we maintain the original concept and take our European allies with us on the project. We have been warned that if the RAF was to

[Mr. McNamara]

increase the weight of the aircraft—undertakings have been given that that is unlikely to happen—it would create tremendous problems with our German colleagues.

The Minister discussed collaboration on the project. The French may still collaborate on a subcontractual basis, because of their relationship with the companies and countries concerned, but they will not take a major lead in the programme. The suggestion made by the Americans that they might be prepared to come in on the effort is a matter of concern to companies in the avionics industry. As I understand the position, American involvement would be in the sphere of avionics. With the present state of the art and the timespan given for the project, American avionics would have the edge unless European Governments make firm and precise commitments that they will be prepared to extend the timespan, so that European avionics can be used in the aircraft. That is vital, because to use avionics from across the Atlantic in a project of that size would be a severe blow to the European avionics industry in general and especially the British avionics industry.

Are we satisfied that the project has been sufficiently defined, so that there will be no material alteration to what was agreed at Turin? Has it yet been decided who will be the firm project leader in the enterprise? One thing that we learned from the Minister about the Nimrod fiasco was that a firm lead was lacking from within the industry or the Ministry of Defence. I do not seek to ascribe blame at this point, but we have learned that there must be a clear definition, object and lead. When will we know who will be the project leader and what will be the date?

Mr. Wilkinson: The hon. Gentleman is being naive. The Panavia team that built the Tornado did not do so on the basis of leadership, but on the basis of joint collaboration. Would it not be sensible to build on the admirable experience gained by the management of that project at an official and industrial level to make the EFA even better?

Mr. McNamara: I want to make the EFA even better. In the Tornado project we played a major part and we were project leaders, especially in terms of the airframe. It was a joint project, but somebody must take a lead, as the Prime Minister says when she says that she believes in Cabinet government.

A little matter that the Minister failed to mention when he congratulated British Aerospace on its contract for the Tornado and the Hawk was the third important element, the PC9, which is a joint venture between British Aerospace and Pilatus in Switzerland. Ministers in their wisdom decided that they did not want that aircraft as a basic trainer for the Royal Air Force.

Shorts and the Tucano were not acceptable to the Saudi royal air force. The Australians have cancelled their project for basic training and have not adopted the Tucano but have gone for the Pilatus PC9. In that case the majority of the avionics and work which would have gone to British Aerospace will not do so, because the Royal Air Force did not take that plane.

Ministers tended to minimise the slippage in the programme. However, there is major slippage, which is not explained by the strike at Shorts. Up to 27 Tucanos were to have been delivered to the Royal Air Force at the end of 1987. Under the original agreement, the first batch of 12 was to have been supplied halfway through 1987. It now looks as though those figures will not be reached. It has been suggested that not only are the first two prototypes being built in Brazil but that possibly the next 10 will also be built in Brazil and not in Belfast. Will the Minister confirm or deny that? It has also been suggested that the programme will be lucky if it is not two years behind time, because of the problems that Shorts face. It is especially ironic that that should be the case when the PC9 will have already gone into service with the Saudi air force, and going from Switzerland for service in Australia.

Many of the delays first arose when the controversy with the contract was going on. One problem has arisen from the shoehorn effect of putting a larger engine into the Tucano framework to meet Royal Air Force specifications. Those problems remain. At SAC at Bristol more than 50 designer draughtsmen and about 18 at Borehamwood are still working on technical problems associated with Shorts. It is not unusual to contract out some designs to smaller companies. However, here we have 50 people employed on a job that cannot be done in the factory in Belfast. That is a major problem that must be faced.

Although the Minister boasts that it is a question of a fixed price contract and that Shorts will be tied to that figure and will receive nothing more from the Ministry of Defence, if Shorts is privatised, the Department of Commerce and Industry in Northern Ireland or the Department of Trade and Industry will have to find more money to cover Shorts' losses on the contract.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): The hon. Gentleman will know that I share his view on the aeroplane that should have been chosen for the Royal Air Force. Is he aware that Shorts have flown the Tucano with the Garrett engine on its maiden flight of 14 February, that it has done six hours and has already done extremely well?

Mr. McNamara: I am aware that the aeroplane eventually flew this month, but it is only one plane that has not yet been accepted. It still has considerable problems, especially at the junction between the engine and the air frame.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): The Government fully accept that the hon. Gentleman took a different view about the decision on the trainer, but now that the decision has been taken, what good does it do to the British aerospace industry and to Shorts especially to persist in denigrating the achievements of Shorts, the aircraft and our co-operative arrangements with Brazil?

Mr. McNamara: The Government made a bad decision with which they must live. The problems of that aeroplane will not go away, and it does no good to hide the fact that the Tucano has major problems. I hope that those problems can be overcome, for the sake of the RAF, but they will not be overcome by trying to minimise or hide them. I hope that the Government will realise that, like all Governments—even Labour ones—they have made a services mistake.

The Nimrod early warning system was a major mistake of many Governments. The Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement should learn that a little humility is sometimes of great advantage in politics. I congratulate the Secretary of State for Defence on taking the advice that the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and

I gave to his predecessor more than a year ago—that urgent consideration should be given to providing a stopgap to fill the enormous hole in our defence capability in the north Atlantic and in our airspace, and that we should spend some time considering the alternatives.

It is easy, as some hon. Members have done, to talk about the large amount of money that has been spent on Nimrod, to throw up our hands in horror and to say that we should decide suddenly to cancel it. But the Minister of State went some way, fairly, to suggest some of the problems that would arise if so drastic a decision was taken immediately. It might help some hon. Members and the country as a whole if we talked about the problems.

If we cancelled the Nimrod system immediately, up to £1 billion would go down the drain, and we should add substantially to our defence budget at a time when it is under considerable strain. Such a cancellation would be a body blow to British avionics, and would seriously damage the reputation of GEC. It would have a deleterious effect on GEC's ability to produce future generations of such avionics. It would leave Britain terribly vulnerable to pressures from American suppliers for our requirements. It would directly affect the employment of 2,000 people. It would be a further attack upon the British manufacturing base, which has suffered enough during the past six years, and it would lead to a great loss of confidence in Britain's technological abilities.

Therefore, before anyone suggests that we could throw Nimrod overboard easily, he should not only think in defence terms, which are important, but he must consider what it would mean to our overall industrial performance and to our reputation as a nation at the frontiers of high technology. We shall consider carefully what the Minister of State said about the proposals. No doubt from the unattributable briefing on Nimrod that is taking place at the Ministry of Defence, further and better particulars will be supplied which, for reasons of time, the Minister could not give us today.

It would appear that the Secretary of State's decision has bought six months' breathing space for £50 million, which, in the context, is a reasonable price to pay. It gives much-needed time for some alternatives to be considered. However, we should remember some aspects of the contract. First, it has been badly managed. I do not wish to discuss in great detail the lessons to be learned, but we have heard about a lack of control by the Ministry of Defence and by the firm. There were budget restraints in 1980 and 1981. Even when it was thought that the project had been defined, problems occurred with the transmitter system and the computers. Although it was designed originally to perform 200 tasks, the system was built up quickly to perform 600 tasks.

We must learn all the lessons from the problems affecting that programme, because it shows us the problems of trying to supervise contracts that are at the frontiers of high technology and that are expensive. If we do not have a precise definition of our targets and we allow ourselves to alter them or to cut the flow of capital into the project, we may again experience the grievous difficulties that are occurring now.

When the Secretary of State evaluates the alternatives, he must give the House precise details of the differing costs. Some people are talking about buying six AWACs at £150 million each, which would cost £900 million. That depends on whether we can open the production line and get precisely what we want. We must remember that the British definition is mainly sea-based whereas American AWACs are generally used for land surveillance. There are many alternative projects. During defence questions, the Minister of State flippantly threw aside the question whether it would be possible to put the GEC system into a different airframe, and refused to discuss the extent to which the airframe was a major difficulty in the system. The House must have sufficient information about those matters.

I do not wish to extend the agony over Westland, but simply to ask one question. If the six secret bidders are shown to have been nominees or friends of Sikorsky, will Sikorsky be forced under Stock Exchange rules to make a takeover bid for Westland? That matter was discussed by the Select Committee on Defence this morning. If that is the case, we shall no longer have a British helicopter industry.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State made an important speech on contracts and mentioned three matters that are important when we consider the restraints that must be placed on the defence budget. They were cost and competition, delivery and due date and proper performance. He said that they were the three criteria used in assessing contracts. He should consider a few other matters, the first of which is the effect upon United Kingdom companies if too much high technology work went to foreign competitors. By how much should the Government sponsor high technology work to maintain a British lead? Sometimes those criteria will be more important than the three simple criteria that he suggested.

The RAF is almost our most expensive force—the most expensive is the Navy because of Trident. What will emerge from the debate will be the anxiety of hon. Members about the quality and work of the RAF and the jobs of their constituents.

One of the things that the Secretary of State must face after he has properly laid down his criteria for new contracts—to which no one could take objection but to which I have added a rider—is the degree to which Trident will continue to squeeze the conventional defence programme.

The Opposition believe that the RAF's problems, its need for proper conventional defences and its need for support on the ground and in the air to maintain the defence of our country and to play a proper conventional role in NATO will never be achieved whilst the Secretary of State and his Ministers have Trident around their necks.

We should have welcomed President Reagan's statement about the zero option because it would have given the Government the opportunity to get away from Trident and we could have then had the proper air force that the country needs.

5.30 pm

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I am delighted to have the opportunity to intervene in this wildly exciting debate. I have listened to service debates for many years and I have always thought that the quietness of the RAF debate contrasted with some of the other service matters that we discuss. That may be good because we can deal with a number of important matters in detail. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) seems able to make the greatest triumph of our services, industry and nation into a matter of the deepest possible gloom. He would do better if he hired himself out as a preacher at funeral services. It is

[Mr. Jerry Wiggin]

depressing to hear some of the things that he has said this afternoon when we all know that we have an Air Force that is the finest in our history. It is better equipped and more powerful and has better officers and men that it has had for many a year. The Opposition should be prepared, occasionally, to give a little credit for that.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State said some extremely welcome things about Westland. As the House is aware, there is a large factory belonging to that company in my constituency. I should like to address myself to the general problem of helicopters in the aftermath of what is known colloquially as the "Westland affair".

One of the causes of that affair was the failure of the services to appreciate the position of the helicopter in the battlefield scene as it exists today. The natural inclination of the service man, dealing as he does with superior officers who have their own opinions, endless committees and advice from all quarters, is, in general, merely to say, "Let us improve the last mark. Let us make mark 7 into mark 8, and if mark 8 can outshoot the equivalent mark 8 of the other side, that is all the equipment that we need." However, now and again there is a quantum leap in the existing technology.

It is not insignificant that when the steam turbine was introduced it was necessary for the inventor to turn up at the Spithead review, and to defy the existing patrol ships to prove that his ship was faster and more agile, in front of the assembled Navy and the world. Only at that moment did the Admiralty appreciate that there had been a quantum leap in steamship propulsion. Similarly, with the machine gun, the tank and the demise of the horse, it has been difficult to persuade the services that there must be a change.

There has been a change. In 1961 Mr. McNamara directed that the United States forces should make an appreciation of the helicopter. If it had not been for the helicopter, the defeat that the Americans suffered in Vietnam would have been swifter and more severe.

I ask that, with the new central staff, well placed and equipped to assess the problems, the helicopter in all its forms and in all services should be reassessed from scratch. There should be not merely an Army study on movement on the battlefield, but a complete appreciation of the helicopter's position as a weapon of war.

Let us evaluate what the helicopter can do. It permeates all areas and all tasks on the battlefield. It is a reconnaissance force able to operate at speed over a wide area. It can rapidly deploy troops with their weapons and vehicles to the right place and in time. It can apply firepower, using its own direct fire weapons or indirectly by moving artillery and other weapons. Helicopters can carry out urgent and accurate resupply directly to the user and often in critical circumstances. Helicopters can acquire information visually or electronically. They can improve communication and enable commanders to exert personal control over wide, fast-moving operations under conditions of radio silence.

Mr. Carter-Jones: I am trying to help the hon. Gentleman. I thought that the reassessment had been made and that it was known as AST404.

Mr. Wiggin: Although I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman and appreciate that he is seeking to be helpful, AST404 is but a small part of the assessment. I shall mention it later.

Helicopters add a new dimension to air defence; first by extending radar coverage and by providing anti-air fire power. They can play a major part in the all-important electronic warfare. Finally, and by no means least, they can evacuate casualties, not merely saving lives but giving combat units greater flexibility of action and improving morale. The helicopter is a vehicle with the potential, if used with imagination and in sufficient strength, to bring about the greatest change in air-land warfare since the motor replaced the horse.

Those points have been appreciated by the Royal Navy. We can be proud of the way in which the Navy has taken the helicopter and used it as an extension of its ships. The Navy has equipped its ships properly for rough weather use of helicopters. It has equipped its helicopters with the necessary electronics and weapons. The captain of a modern ship will say that the loss of his helicopter is a serious diminution of his fighting ability.

The Navy seems to have grasped the point. The Army must assess the problem. I draw my hon. Friend's attention to an authoritative article by Mr. John Witherow in *The Sunday Times* of 19 January in which he claims that a dozen modern wars, from Korea to Afghanistan, have taught the Americans and Russians the value of the helicopter in modern warfare. He stated:

"When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, for example, Israeli helicopters destroyed 48 tanks for each helicopter lost. Each Syrian helicopter, in return, was knocking out 15 Israeli tanks."

Mr. Simpkin, the well-known military strategist,

"maintains that the Russians rate a combat force of 84 helicopters (requiring a total of 2,000 men) as the equivalent of a tank division of 10,000 men and 500 vehicles."

Ministers, ever watchful of the cost-effectiveness of the weapons that they procure, should bear in mind those extremely important figures. A ratio of 48 tanks to one helicopter is an extremely good attrition rate. If one bears in mind that that is only one use of the helicopter—in its anti-tank role—one sees that the Army possesses a most effective weapon.

The Americans and the Russians have grasped that point. With the exception of the Spaniards, our nation is the most poorly equipped with helicopters in Europe. One of the problems that we have is the control of helicopters. I hope that the central staff will take a firm view on that matter. There is a ridiculous division of responsibility whereby the Air Force flies only helicopters above a certain weight and the Army operates those below a certain weight. That is not cost-effective and leads to a lack of flexibility in command and control. It makes the helicopter the Cinderella of both services. That is not just my view; it is shared by all those who operate helicopters in both services and by all those who need the benefit of helicopters, particularly battalion and company commanders when they are in action. It seems that we are the only Army in NATO that operates on this basis. It leads to distrust and to a diminution in the use of helicopters, which I strongly deplore.

The AST404 was referred to by the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones). I should remind the House that the AST404 was held up originally in late 1984. It was then said that, as a result of the experience of one exercise,

the Army had decided to re-evaluate the AST404. Three helicopters are suitable for the AST404: the WG30, the Super Puma and the Black Hawk.

I do not understand why Ministers have allowed the Army to consider a proposition that will put no fewer than 35 men into one helicopter. We must bear in mind the disastrous effect of the loss of one Sea King helicopter during the Falklands war when 22 brave men were on board. As any battlefield commander will know, it is a matter of small packets and many of them. There is an ever-increasing need for the AST404, which is a medium sized helicopter. Whether it is the Black Hawk or the WG30, we in Somerset shall be very happy to make it for the Ministry.

The performance criteria of the NH90 are less than those for the existing Black Hawk. It would be extremely imaginative if a European-built Black Hawk could be made, thus saving research and development expense in Europe and achieving at the same time the almost impossible task—at least until now—of providing a standardised transport helicopter across the whole of the NATO front in Europe. That would make extraordinarily good sense.

In 1962 Mr. McNamara wrote:

"The Army needed to re-examine its aviation requirements with a bold, NEW-LOOK at land warfare mobility."

I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that 25 years later it might be no bad thing if the British Army did the same.

I should explain that in the Weston-super-Mare factory of Westland the prime responsibility is for spare parts and product support. The House may know that the Ministry of Defence runs an organisation called the Naval Air Repair Organisation, with the Royal Navy air yard at Fleetlands and the Royal Navy air workshops at Perth. They employ about 1,400 people and compete directly in a dockyard type of operation with the factory at Weston-super-Mare. I do not deplore that. If, however, the philosophy and principles that the Minister has rightly applied to the dockyards were to be extended to the support of the 750 helicopters that the Ministry of Defence possesses, it might be better if rather more repair work came out of the Ministry of Defence and went into private industry—that is, into Westland, which makes the spare parts and therefore has an advantage over other companies. Although Westland would not be too keen to hear me say this, perhaps the existence of another repair contractor would add the necessary competition and edge that the Minister's Department rightly seeks. The principle could be extended. The numbers involved are not huge. There is an opportunity here for a substantial increase in efficiency.

May I remind the Minister that it costs about £2 million to train a Royal Air Force helicopter pilot but that it costs only £200,000 to train an Army helicopter pilot. The number of helicopters per 10,000 men is 17 in the United States Army and 2½ in the British Army. I hope that I have said enough to induce my hon. Friend the Minister of State to grasp this point and examine the issue, however he wishes to do it, as a matter of extreme urgency.

Many other right hon. and hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, but I wish to say a word or two about the Meteorological Office. It is the responsibility of the Royal Air Force and it is a matter of intense public interest to every member of the population. They may not know that the Meteorological Office is now costing them nearly £1 million a week—£47·5 million a year. In addition, it takes receipts from repayment services of £20 million, of which £15·5 million comes from civil aviation. That adds about £100 to the cost of a flight from London to Glasgow in meteorological services alone and it costs about £40,000 a year for every registered aircraft in Britain. This is by no means efficient. It is amazingly inefficient.

I do not criticise the technical services of the Meteorological Office. It is accepted world wide that the ability of the Meteorological Office to collect, collate and usually to interpret data is at least as good as that of anybody else. However, within that bureaucratic organisation there has grown up such a hive of Civil Service red tape that my hon. Friend the Minister would be well advised to read with care the report of Sir Kenneth Sharp and Mr. John Hansford that he kindly agreed to put in the Library a day or two ago at my request. It is quite a long report and I have not had an opportunity to study it in detail. However, I draw the attention of the House to one or two of their many recommendations.

First, Sir Kenneth Sharp and Mr. John Hansford say:

"We recommend that the Meteorological Office should adopt a commercial approach to all its dealings and that its charges should be based where practical on market conditions, and where not practical by free negotiation between the parties concerned."

That is different from the existing, ancient practice of Government Departments, which simply work out what they think the cost is, add on a percentage and pretend that they are being commercial by making that charge. The Meteorological Office charges itself out of the wrong markets and manages to put off profitable private enterprise operations in which it has a public duty to get involved.

Sir Kenneth Sharp and Mr. John Hansford also say:

"We recommend the establishment of a Management Board, consisting of a Chairman, a Chief Executive, 3 Executive Directors and 2 non-Executive Directors".

My hon. Friend the Minister has had this report since last August. There is nothing difficult about this. The Government tackled all the difficulties when they dealt with the Ordnance Survey. As a matter of considerable urgency I ask my hon. Friend at least to establish a management board and to get the Meteorological office's accounting system on to a proper basis. Many of the complaints of private enterprise and of those who are involved in working with the Meteorological Office would then go away. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister does not wish to preside over a part of his Department where the accounting function is subject to considerable criticism.

The suggestion that the Royal Air Force and the Meteorological Office should have an arm's-length relationship seems to appeal to both the Meteorological Office and the RAF. The Meteorological Office could provide the required service at minimum cost and the Royal Air Force could require the most cost-effective way of satisfying its minimal operational requirements. Similar arrangements should be entered into between the Meteorological Office and the Civil Aviation Authority to stop the endless bickering that goes on between the airlines because of the huge costs they have incurred for what seems to them to be meteorological information that is provided on the most expensive basis. Nowhere else in the world does it appear to cost the same amount.

The question of how the Civil Aviation Authority is administered is not one for my hon. Friend the Minister

[Mr. Wiggin]

of State for Defence Procurement. However, the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcestershire, South (Mr. Spicer), said:

"Records are kept by Eurocontrol and the CAA respectively in respect of the bills which they issue."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 430.]

When I asked how much British airlines were charged, I was told that the estimate was about 50 per cent. but that it would be too costly to obtain the details. If my hon. Friend the Minister of State is teasing some of his colleagues within the Government about Meteorological Office matters, which he will have to do to get this to work properly, he should have a go at that.

There have been many other complaints. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Browne) may have a letter in the post about some of the difficulties that are experienced by private weather services in getting information not only out of Bracknell but out of the European centre for medium range weather forecasts. It is cheaper for a British firm to get information from America and to bring it back, at a cost in dollars, than it is to pay a fee in sterling to our own Meteorological Office for exactly the same information which is transmitted on an international telecommunications network. That is idiotic.

I think that I stuck strictly to two points but I would conclude by repeating my opening remarks. I believe that the Royal Air Force is in a healthy state in numbers, the quality of its officers and men and its fighting ability. I hope that the Government will have sorted out the major problem of helicopters by this time next year, because, having raised the same subject this time, I shall hope not to have to make such a pressing speech next year and I shall be able to join in the praise which I hope will come from both sides of the House.

5.50 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I join in the tributes that have been paid to the Royal Air Force and to those serving in it. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) spoke about the work that was done by the Royal Air Force in the Indian jumbo jet disaster. I also want to mention, because it has some relevance to my own constituency, the work that the Royal Air Force has been doing in connection with the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in Scotland in surveillance and fishery protection. That is to be put into private hands in the coming weeks and we shall be looking with interest to see whether it is carried out as efficiently as it has been by the Royal Air Force for some considerable time.

Another matter is the important work that the Royal Air Force does in air and sea rescue. That was brought home only last weekend with the unfortunate sinking of a French fishing vessel between Scotland and Iceland. The Royal Air Force played an important role in that rescue. In that connection, may I remind the Minister, although I am sure that he is aware, of the representations that have been made in the north of Scotland, particularly the north-west of Scotland, about the possibility of a helicopter air-sea rescue facility on the west coast of Scotland or in Stornoway to respond more readily to incidents that arise in those waters.

The Minister and other hon. Members have spoken about the re-equipping of the RAF which has taken place in recent years. I join those who have welcomed the success of the Tornado project, in particular the export achievements that have followed from it. There are probably many lessons we can learn from the collaboration that took place at industrial, ministerial and Government level on the Tornado project which could be put to good use with the European fighter aircraft. I think that there will inevitably be problems because, although collaboration brings savings in costs, it also brings increases in costs as a result of the administration which goes with it. For as long as countries, quite naturally, try to secure some national advantage, even though they are collaborating, it will be impossible to iron out all the costs. I believe that there will be lessons to be learned from the Tornado project which perhaps will minimise these costs in the European fighter aircraft project.

We listened carefully to the Minister's announcement about the future of Nimrod advanced early warning system. I think that we shall wish to consider the small print and fine detail of what he has said. However, I welcome the fact that the possibility of that British high technology being put into operation in the future is still open. It is easy with hindsight to be critical and there has been a cosy arrangement between the two Front Benches saying that all Governments bear some responsibility. I am in the fortunate position of not having been a member of a party in government, although no doubt someone will quickly point out that my colleagues in the Social Democratic party had some part to play in the decision taken in the late 1970s.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman's party did not object at the time it was first approved.

Mr. Wallace: I am sorry. I was not going to make any party political point. I think that we can all learn lessons from what has happened. From reading reports it would appear that on a number of occasions specifications or requirements have been made for which there has not been adequate funding or permission to go ahead to meet the targets that have been set.

In saying that we must learn lessons from what has taken place. If it ever comes to the stage, as I am sure it will during the next six months, when we are considering possible alternatives, it is important that we take notice of some of the lessons we have learned from, for example, the Trident project, if we are considering alternatives from across the Atlantic.

When considering AWACS it is important to bear in mind possible increasing costs. Those additional costs seem to creep up and up in the case of Trident. I think that there has been some levelling out over the past two years, but the cost is now much higher than it was originally. It is also important to consider the time factor if we are considering the possibility of buying AWACS as a possible replacement. For example, is it correct that AWACS is not in production and that it would require re-tooling? What time would it take for that and what time would it take to train our RAF pilots in the Boeing aircraft, of which, I understand, they do not have much experience? I think that those points should be borne in mind when comparisons are being made.

The matter of helicopters was raised by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin). I note and welcome the fact that the Minister has said that the Government will encourage any project involving

European collaboration in the light of the Sikorsky deal with Westland. I am sure that that further reassurance will be welcomed by my hon. Friends the Members for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) and Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross). The EH101 is still in the future. The great problem with the Government not going ahead with AST404 is that there is still a gap to be bridged until the EH101 is in production.

I heartily endorse the remarks made by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare. The matters he mentioned were raised during the debate on the Army. There is a divided responsibility for the use of helicopters between the RAF and the Army and, perhaps as a result of that, neither service gives them the importance which they ought to have. If one is working in a service with strategic aircraft and fighter aircraft, perhaps helicopters do not have a sufficiently macho image for anyone to give any weight to the important role they could play. I do not think that sufficient attention has been given to the tactical advantages which light helicopters can provide in battlefield positions. The United States and the Soviet Union both have strong fleets of helicopters for land battle.

Mr. Wilkinson: That has been said already.

Mr. Wallace: I have acknowledged the fact that it has been said already. It was said by the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare and it was said during the debate on the Army by my hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil and by the hon. Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart). My point was that, in spite of that, we did not have any response from the Minister who replied to the debate on the Army to the effect that those comments had been taken on board or that any consideration was being given in the Ministry of Defence to a unified command for helicopters and that one service would take responsibility for them. In the absence of that reassurance, or any acknowledgement that there was a problem, I do not think that there is any harm in repeating that fact in the hope that we might elicit some response from the Minister in this debate.

I want to deal with a constituency matter which I believe has more general application. I am sorry that the Minister has gone because I think that, with his Shetland origins, I could perhaps have appealed to him more directly. However, I am sure that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary will pass my comments on to him. I want to deal with the policing of RAF Saxa Vord in Unst. Recently, five Ministry of Defence police were replaced by RAF personnel. On an island with a relatively small population, five families losing their main source of employment has a serious effect on the island and on the community. I understand that after representations were made, although they were mobile personnel and could legitimately have been asked to go elsewhere, the fact that they had long-standing roots within the community meant that the Ministry of Defence was prepared to consider redundancy for them. Perhaps the Minister could say whether they have been paid. The economic importance of the work that they did for the community was considerable.

If I were trying to make the case solely on the grounds of employment in my constituency, the Minister might say that there are wider strategic operational considerations, but the case for retaining the Ministry of Defence police in such places as RAF Saxa Vord is a good operational one. That case was generally supported by the committee that sat under Sir Ewen Broadbent to look into the future role of the Ministry of Defence police.

The Government's arguments for replacing the Ministry of Defence police by service personnel were that it was not thought desirable to have mixed civilian and service personnel, and there was no direct line of command. However, all these arguments were rejected by Sir Ewen Broadbent, who saw considerable advantages in having mixed personnel. He also believed that it was a waste of resources having trained personnel in what are essentially policing jobs; and that it was undesirable that there should be such a public interface between service men and the public, particularly as the absence of police powers could be disadvantageous for the service men.

That decision was taken essentially because of costs, like so many other service decisions. As the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said — penny-wise, pound-foolish. It was represented as much cheaper in the short term to use service personnel, particularly because of the overtime consideration. However, I suggest that in the longer term, the costs of the turnover that inevitably takes place with postings to remote places such as Saxa Vord, of removing furniture and returning people home for holidays, all mount up and, at the end of the day, the costs are greater than the purported savings.

In all the service debates that we have had there has been continual talk about costs. Both sides of the House have welcomed the European fighter aircraft but in the last Defence Estimates we were not shown where the costings would come. Again, we believe that Trident is the cuckoo in the nest, the one squeezing out other defence expenditure, and something will have to give if the Government are to meet all their various targets and commitments.

To date, the Government have avoided trying to have an overall review of their commitments and instead have continued to penny-pinch, pruning a little here, paring back there. This has resulted in a number of service men leaving the services. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North gave the figures, which show not only the loss of money invested in training the men but that morale in the services should not be so low that so many people are leaving.

The House has heard much of the RAF's new equipment, but that will only be put to good use if there are sufficient service personnel eager and keen to use it. It is a matter of long-term concern to the House if continued penny-pinching and so-called salami slicing undermines the morale of our service men in the RAF.

6.3 pm

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) spoke about the European fighter aircraft. What saddens me about the name is that it is not a European fighter aircraft. One of the largest aircraft producers in western Europe is outside the project. That does not limit the effectiveness of the project, but it makes one believe that Europe has still some distance to go before it has created a European concept in making and acquiring defence equipment. I hope that there may still be an opportunity to persuade the French to think again. I am a little concerned that Spain, which is one of the partners, is considering its membership of NATO. I do not know whether that is important, or whether the project is dependent upon Spain remaining in NATO. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will probe that point.

[Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson]

I welcome what my hon. Friend the Minister said about Nimrod and the clarification that he gave us of the existing position. It is high time that the aircraft was brought into service. It continues to amaze me that we have managed to get along so well with the aging Shackletons without a serious gap in our defence ability. That cannot go on indefinitely, and the sooner that the Nimrod problem is resolved, the better for us all. Naturally, I hope that GEC will be able to sort out the problems with the radar in such a way that the Ministry of Defence will be able to acquire the aircraft and that it will go into squadron service soon.

On a purely facetious note, I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will give some thought to renaming the Shorts Tucano. I think that tucano is the Portuguese for toucan, and an Anglicised Shorts Tucano — Shorts Toucan — would sound a bit better. However, as the aircraft is to be used for pilot training I am sure that we can devise an Anglicised word——

Mr. Robert Atkins: Guinness.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: —such as the Shorts Sky Student or something similar. I do not think that we should go south of the border.

Although the debate is primarily about the Royal Air Force, I shall concentrate my remarks on the safety and compensation aspect of the service and what is available to service men. Reference has already been made to the morale of the 86,000 men and women who serve in the RAF and I am sure that it remains, as it always has, at a high level. However, I make no apology for wondering how many of those service men have, in the past few months, if not the past few years, given some thought to their position under the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) for the campaign that he has so ably led, and I am sure that he will understand why I feel that I, too, want to make my contribution to the debate. This is a matter of great importance to all service men, and we have to think, and think again, to get the right resolution of what I consider to be something of a scandal.

As we all know, the Act effectively denies service personnel the right in peace time to sue for negligence when they have been injured, or for their next of kin to sue when they have been killed. All the service men can do is claim what is almost a nominal amount through the armed forces compensation board. No matter how dreadful the injury or how long-lasting the after effects, service men are prevented from using the due processes of our courts, although those processes are open to every other citizen.

I am aware that the Ministry of Defence claims that discipline would be endangered if the claims were allowed. In the past five years, there have been 13 representations. If there have been so few, I find it difficult to believe that discipline would be endangered if those 13 persons had been allowed to pursue their claims. I question whether the arguments put forward during the debate on the 1947 Act still hold good. The then Attorney-General told the House about section 10 that

"it is necessary in the course of Service training, in order to secure the efficiency of the Forces, to exercise them in the use of live ammunition, in flying in close formation and, in the Navy, in battle conditions, with, perhaps, destroyers dashing about with lights out, and so on. These operations are highly dangerous and, if done by private citizens, would, no doubt, be extremely blameworthy, but it is impossible to apply the ordinary law of tort in regard to them, or make the Crown liable for any injury which, unhappily, results." — [*Official Report*, 4 July 1947; Vol. 439, c. 1681.]

The former Attorney-General had a point. However, it is not impossible to devise legislation that will exclude training in which battle conditions were simulated but which would allow service men, in the normal course of their duties, to sue for negligence.

It is difficult to argue that a service man who has suffered a broken back or brain damage in the ordinary course of his duties should be denied rights which apply to every other citizen in the country and which apply to policemen and firemen who, in the course of their duties, face special risks.

I have raised that point as I remember the coach crash which took place last February on the autobahn in West Germany. In that accident 21 people were killed, 13 of whom were Royal Air Force bandsmen and one of whom was a Royal Air force policeman. A further 18 people were injured. Presumably, under section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947, the next of kin of the dead bandsmen will be debarred from suing for negligence and the injured, by the same token, can do no more. All they can receive, as I said, is whatever the armed forces compensation board cares to give them, but they cannot sue as any passenger in a civilian coach crash could for the negligence which caused their injuries or, as in the case of next of kin, caused the deaths of their loved ones.

When that accident happened, the House paid tribute to the RAF bandsmen and a statement was made by a Minister. The press was full of the story and yet now that the story has left the newspapers we forget the human misery that was left behind. Although I know that my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State is looking into the matter, I say it is most urgent that we find an alternative solution to simply saying that the section, as it exists now, preserves military discipline. That case has not been made and it is because I believe that that I have made these points this evening.

I want now to refer to the issue of accidents within the service. First of all, I would like to mention the air accidents which took place in the last year for which figures are available in the Defence Estimates. The Estimates show that in 1984 five aircrew were killed and 14 were seriously injured and that 20 aircraft were lost or seriously damaged. From a parliamentary answer, I understand that the number of regular service personnel killed so far in 1985—these figures are not confined to Royal Air Force personnel—totalled 24. The figures underline the need for compensation for the next of kin and they lead me back to an old hobby horse of mine which I hope the House will forgive me if I ride again—the question of writing off the costs of loss and damage in the service.

In 1981 I made a speech about aircraft accidents in the Royal Air Force. I suggested at the time that a method might be considered for insuring aircraft in peacetime. The idea may at first sound rather far fetched but, as some other overseas air forces do that, I could not see why the Royal Air Force should not at least consider the matter. In June 1981, I was told that 24 aircraft had been lost. As I have said, 20 aircraft were lost in 1984. That figure does not vary very much from year to year, sometimes it is one or two more, and sometimes one or two less. When I put the

argument forward, I was told that it was a matter for the Treasury and the then Minister of State at the Treasury informed me:

"It is a long established Government policy not to pay a commercial insurance premium unless there is a statutory or contractual obligation or a particular advantage, such as specialist services, over and above the possible receipt of compensation for loss."

The 20 aircraft lost in 1984, which were worth well over £100 million, were simply written off and the taxpayer asked to pay for their replacement.

Mr. Robert Atkins: My hon. Friend's remarks have even more pertinence. When the RAF allows aircraft to be used at Farnborough and other air shows, it expects the companies to insure the aircraft at their expense at a very high insurance premium. If the RAF is prepared to ask that of commercial companies, why should it not be prepared to use the option itself?

Mr. McNair-Wilson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for adding to and considerably strengthening my argument, and I hope that the Minister heard what he said.

If I have not persuaded the Government to consider insurance for the Air Force, perhaps I may ask the Minister to consider insurance for the Air Force's fixed assets. A Royal Air Force base is not unlike a factory. It has many similar services — offices filled with furniture, typewriters and expensive equipment. There are carpets, windows, curtains, large stocks of fuel and engineering equipment for repairing aircraft and so on. There are stores filled with uniforms, boots, underclothing, hats, socks and great coats. I could go on, but I shall say only that all the services that one could find in a large factory can be found in a Royal Air Force establishment. In other words, there is a multiplicity of damageable items.

I suggest to the Minister that even if aircraft insurance seems a little far fetched—and having heard the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble I do not think that it is—perhaps it is time that the Government gave some thought to privatising the risk which is otherwise carried on the Consolidated Fund and is paid for by the taxpayer.

I recently asked the Secretary of State what losses have been experienced by the Ministry of Defence through fire damage in buildings and stores in the past five years. I was told:

"Fire damage to Ministry of Defence buildings and stores has resulted in losses of £166 million over the past five years. By far the largest proportion of these losses, estimated by the board of inquiry at £152 million, is attributable to the fire at the central ordnance depot, Donnington on 24 June 1983." — [*Official Report*, 11 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 778.]

I wonder whether that answer is absolutely accurate. I hesitate to say it, but I wonder whether the author of that answer which my hon. Friend gave to me had considered the loss of RAF Brampton, two thirds of which was destroyed by fire. I find it difficult to believe that the £14 million left from the sum of £166 million covers the loss of RAF Brampton and all other losses.

I thought I ought to find out how many RAF establishments there were and how much their stores and assets were worth. I tabled a question to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which was answered by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 19 February. He said:

"The number of establishments in which the Royal Air Force has the major interest is at present 128, comprising 57 RAF airfields in the United Kingdom and 10 overseas and 57 other RAF stations in the United Kingdom and four overseas. These figures exclude RAF units operating from non-RAF locations and stations in which the RAF does not have the major interest. No estimate is readily available on the value of RAF buildings, facilities and stores and the assembly of this information would involve a disproportionate amount of effort in both the Ministry of Defence and the Property Services Agency." — [*Official Report*, 19 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 184.]

I do not know how those words strike you, Mr. Speaker, but they suggest to me that nobody in the Ministry of Defence knows the current value of RAF buildings, facilities and stores. If anyone knew, it would presumably have been put into the parliamentary answer. When it is said that finding out the value would require a disproportionate amount of effort I become rather worried. We know that the Ministry of Defence is one of the big spenders—perhaps among the top six. Yet it cannot say how much stock it is carrying, so presumably it does not know the value of its facilities or even of its stores. That is not satisfactory.

I have concentrated on fire damage, but I could spread the argument to other areas. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister, when he winds up the debate, will tell us the other replacement costs faced by the RAF each year.

Mr. Wiggin: On fire prevention, my hon. Friend the Minister might also be encouraged to investigate the non-flying station fire brigades. The Navy abolished these some years ago and its total fire losses have been somewhat reduced. There was a fire brigade at the ordnance depot at which a very serious fire occurred, but it was unable to put out the fire. A substantial economy of several hundred men might be achieved if the non-flying station fire brigades were abolished.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Yet another point has arisen of which I was unaware. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will take it on board. It is time that the Ministry of Defence could tell the House that a pilot study has been carried out on at least one aspect of MOD stores and facilities in terms of bringing the risk of fire and other damage to the insurance market. It would be useful to know whether the Ministry has considered the possibility that this opens up and the kind of premiums that might be paid.

Mr. Lee: Even setting aside the Treasury rules and the huge administrative and financial cost of preparing the type of insurance exercise to which my hon. Friend refers, the commercial market would be bound to look mathematically and actuarially at the occurrence of accidents and fires over a period and take that into account in assessing premiums. It would then add, understandably in the commercial world, its own profit. With the greatest respect, therefore, I fail to see the advantage in my hon. Friend's suggestion.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: My hon. Friend has put forward the argument that I expected from him—the argument advanced by the Treasury—but the same argument applies to factory premises. Why should a factory owner bother to take out insurance cover? The RAF may hold certain assets on which the premiums would be so high that it would be better to leave things as they are with the Government carrying the insurance risk within the Consolidated Fund, but let us not misunderstand what that means. It means that if a huge loss of £166 million is made the taxpayer has to find the money.

At a time when we are thinking of privatising so many services, I suggest that there are aspects of the assets held

[Mr. McNair-Wilson]

by the RAF and other armed services which might reasonably be regarded as ordinary commercial risks and which could at least be put out to tender in the insurance market. If the premiums are so much greater than the amounts currently written off in the Consolidated Fund, clearly my argument fails, but if we do not even have the information we cannot say whether there is strength in the argument. When I ask what assets are held by the RAF in terms of fixed facilities and stores and I am told that the Ministry of Defence does not know and that it would not be worth while to find out, I am left wondering whether the service is being run as well as it should be.

I know from conversations with people in the Ministry of Defence that when equipment breaks down or is seriously damaged no attempt is made to repair it. A replacement is simply acquired because there is no accountability of the kind that obtains in private industry. All the armed forces are a form of industry and there should be accountability. In case anyone thinks that I have any involvement, I should make it clear that I have no connection whatever with the insurance industry. Unless the Government can make a watertight case against my argument, we should at least expect a pilot scheme to be conducted on some aspect of RAF stores to see what figures are produced.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Twelve hon. Members who have been here since the beginning of the debate still wish to take part. If all confine their speeches to about 12 minutes they can all be called before the winding-up speeches begin.

6.25 pm

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones (Eccles): I shall be grateful if you, Mr. Speaker, will catch my eye when my 12 minutes are up.

Mr. Speaker: I will do that.

Mr. Carter-Jones: It is a double pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson). He has introduced a novel note and I hope that he will be successful. It is also gratifying to see a kidney patient taking part in activities in the House and making a strong case.

If you, Mr. Speaker, had intervened in the debate you would doubtless have mentioned my next point, as would the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) or my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy). This is an RAF debate, but the Ministers do not realise that it is the 50th anniversary of the Spitfire. That was a real aircraft, not a paper one.

I hope that certain Members will take note of my next point as it concerns them. I quote from the *Official Report:*

"In my closing speech in the defence debate . . . I gave then, and I repeat now, an assurance to my hon. Friend . . . that there would be no unnecessary delay in announcing a decision on AST403 . . .

In accordance with our objective of seeking collaboration where the conditions are advantageous, we have for some time been investigating the possibility of a joint project with France and Germany to develop a new tactical — or European — combat aircraft to meet AST403."—[*Official Report,* 23 June 1980; Vol. 987, c. 44-45.]

That was a long time ago. The hon. Member to whom the assurance was given was the then hon. Member for Preston, North—now the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). That quotation shows that there are sometimes unnecessary delays in vital decisions. In my 12 minutes, I intend to mention some of those delays.

In this context, I must pay tribute to the previous Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine). With the assistance of both Conservative and Opposition Members, he got a lot of kicks in the backside but he also got a great deal of support and I am glad that at the end of the day he succeeded in getting an aircraft available for the 1990s. It was a very close-run thing.

I wish to refer back to the Tucano trainer, for two reasons. The decision to buy was most peculiar. We had a very honest statement from the Minister of State for Defence Procurement at the start of the debate. I hope that the Minister in winding up will be equally honest and will tell us exactly how that decision was made and why it turned on a peculiar telephone call.

That is no way to run an air force. It is no way to take orders or come to decisions. The Minister said that there would be no extra charge because it was a fixed price contract. Will Short Brothers Ltd. pay the additional costs of running the Jet Provost in old age without the added modifications? Can the Minister when he replies give a firm assurance that there will be no additional costs of any form to the RAF as a result of the delay?

There is an absurd situation regarding the Nimrod return to work. The Minister is an accountant, as he showed when he replied to his hon. Friend the Member for Newbury. Accountants are frequently foolish fellows. To insist upon open tendering for the Nimrod return to work for Woodford is appalling. Nobody can possibly compete. Woodford is the obvious place to send these aircraft to enable the RAF to get them back into service, as all the plans and equipment are there. It is false for the Minister to pretend that it is possible to have competitive tendering for this work when there is nobody else to tender.

The Minister is merely going through the motions. He should really relieve the anxieties of the staff at Woodford by obtaining a fair fixed-price contract and give Woodford the full go ahead. To refurbish a Nimrod is a complicated, complex piece of work. The Minister should go and see it for himself, when he would realise that it is no job for some company to do for the first time. If he studies the situation he may come to a decision which is good for British industry.

We were given an honest statement by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, but there was one telling phrase that I was not happy with. The Minister talked of going for a minimum standard—a minimum qualification. I am an ex-Mosquito navigator. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, Hear."] That is lovely.

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): How did the hon. Gentleman ever get there?

Mr. Carter-Jones: I got there because the equipment was good. My abilities as a navigator were not great but the equipment was superb. The Minister must understand this. One cannot provide the RAF with lower standards in avionics.

When I was in the RAF I used the mark 4 air interceptor followed by the mark 8 AI and the mark 10 AI. It was without any doubt the best radar air interceptor in the world. The Minister must not stand at the Dispatch Box

and say that second rate will do. Second best is not good enough and if one pays peanuts one attracts monkeys. One has to pay the proper price to get the Nimrod AEW going. There is no alternative—and for Heaven's sake keep it British. The Ministry has gone so far down the line that I think the Minister on reflection will decide this is what he has to do.

The story of the Westland W30 was a saga. This time last year it filled our RAF debate. The Minister was warned by his right hon. and hon. Friends and by Opposition Members about the cash flow problems. We went to see the Minister for Defence Procurement and collaborated with the hon. Members for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) and for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) to try to preserve Westland. At the end of the day Westland was misled by AST 404. It foolishly thought that the Ministry of Defence meant what it said. Westland thought that the AST 404 was sacrosanct. It is a good thing the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and I do not have to play or referee rugby matches by changing the rules. But certainly the Ministry of Defence changed the rules—it put Westland on the spot. It caused severe difficulties for the company, and the Ministry must accept responsibility. The Minister said that it was the Army that had moved the targets, but one must agree that it was the Ministry which allowed it to move the targets. The Ministry must assert its authority.

I must be careful if I praise the current members of the RAF, because if I do, they will start swinging from lamp posts and all sorts of things. However, I believe the RAF has played a role which is well worth praising. Its work on famine relief was superb. That work helped morale and that is important. It has helped to establish a closer affinity between the military and civilian sectors. The air sea rescues by helicopters also warm the heart. The work of the Nimrods and Shackletons for rescues further out at sea are also vital. May I wave one small flag? Any humane activity by the RAF helps to boost its morale. There is a tendency in the forces to throw around too much bumf and I do not want to see that, but I would like to see the helicopter side of the RAF doing much more work with regard to getting pregnant women, when there are problems of perinatal care and mortality, to the appropriate special care baby units urgently.

That would also benefit the RAF for training purposes. The RAF should not need to ring up Air Command for permission to help in these matters. It should be a matter of routine. Let the RAF and the military sections demonstrate their abilities.

I would like hon. Members to consider a quote from a speech made by the new Secretary of State for Defence last year. He said:

"As I explained earlier, international collaboration, especially with our European allies, plays an increasingly large part in the way we see defence procurement developing."

Let that be the reality, and not just a sentence in a speech to a learned organisation.

As a peroration—it is my peroration—delays in firm positive ordering and changes in stated requirements seriously undermine the British aerospace and technology industry. It does not help morale in the RAF. It will be difficult, but I hope the Minister will be allowed to keep the promises he has made today.

6.37 pm

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) because he speaks with authority on these issues. However, I was always under the impression that the Mosquito was a paper aeroplane, albeit flown very well. In view of your remarks, Mr. Speaker, I will try not to delay the House for too long.

I welcome, in their absence, the new Secretary of State for Defence and the Minister of State for Defence Procurement. There are important issues to be faced, and I hope that they will deal with them with the same skill and professionalism as that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), and his colleague the then Minister of State, the hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Mr. Pattie). There are three questions I wish to put to my hon. Friend the Minister, which he may answer tonight or at another time. The first concerns the hoary problem of the identification friend or foe system, now the NATO identification system. This has been a scandal over the years. However there have been some improvements in recent months relating to the decision as to which band will be used. I wonder whether the Minister can give me some information on where we stand on that.

My second point relates to what passes for air staff requirement 888 or UKADGE. Where do we stand on that? I understand that the work being done is going to schedule. Will the Minister say whether there are any problems? My third point relates to air staff requirement 1012 which involves the up-date of the Buccaneer, especially the up-date of the S2s. I understand that the programme for £150 million has fallen to about £50 million. Is the programme to be tailored to the Sea Eagles, because we may have lost the up-date of mission avionics which is crucial to this popular aeroplane?

As I am one of the hon. Members who represent the area where Tornado is made, it gives me enormous pleasure to welcome this massive order. I get fed up with the carping criticism of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) about a project and contract which mean so much to my constituents and the workers, and to many companies in the British aerospace industry. Moreover, it grates to hear Liberal Members, who are specialists in sitting on the fence and keeping both ears to the ground, talking as they did about issues they chose to ignore before those issues came to fruition. Nevertheless, the contract is massive and I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley for the enormous volume of work that he put in.

My hon. Friend the Minister referred to the attrition order on Tornado, and talked in glowing terms about nine aeroplanes. I find that astonishing because my friends in British Aerospace and the RAF expect an attrition order of 60 or 70 aeroplanes, and say that nine aeroplanes made no sense in relation to what the Germans are ordering, even allowing for their ECR connotation. We should pay more attention to that. Can the Minister tell me what progress is being made on the potential Turkish order? The Prime Minister of Turkey was in the United Kingdom on Monday, and progress must be made. I would appreciate any comments from my hon. Friend on that.

Many colleagues on both sides of the House have spoken about Nimrod. I offer my congratulations to the Secretary of State on the deal he has cobbled together. So far, so good. We have spent about £1,000 million on the

[Mr. Robert Atkins]

project, and it is already three years late. GEC maintains that the project meets 90 per cent. of the specifications, whereas the RAF maintains that it is nearer 25 per cent. of the set requirement. A figure of about £400 million has been bandied around regarding the up-date cost, and we have heard about the estimated time of delivery, which is June 1989, providing the project meets with the RAF's specifications.

The reasons for that date are plain to many hon. Members. The RAF changed the specifications. For example the operator function increased from 200 to 600, and caused many problems. In addition the defence moratorium of 1981 had a regrettable side effect on the Nimrod programme. The RAF are reputed to want AWACs. That line is closed, it will cost money and, moreover, Nimrod will provide the technological lead in radar that is necessary. The aeroplanes already exist. They have been reconstructed by British Aerospace, and the RAF would be working on aeroplanes in service in terms of spares and support. We can ill-afford to lose that. The write-off of development costs is not easily acceptable. I believe deeply in design teams, and the design team involved in the project is one of only three in the western world. If the project is lost, we shall lose that design team, which is a sad possibility. As it was a cost-plus contract, the authorities controlling the programme must bear a great deal of responsibility. Above all, we must consider the problem of the Shackletons, which are practically falling from the sky. They are unquestionably wonderful aeroplanes, and the work done by those who fly in them and maintain them is remarkable. However, we need an aeroplane in the short term, and we may have to lease it.

I can do no better than to quote from the editorial of *Flight* on 1 February 1986. Referring to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State it states:

"Achieving what is best for the country must be his aim, not what is deemed best in the short-term view for the Service, the Government or even for the contractor. The Secretary of State does not face an easy decision, but if he looks at the question in the right perspective, he may well decide that having progressed this far along the line towards what is acknowledged to be a difficult target, this is no time to lose heart and pull out of the project."

That sums up the position fairly well.

While on the subject of procurement, I noticed my right hon. Friend's remarks in a report in the *Financial Times* today regarding the cutting of advanced payments on contracts. During the moratorium, small companies involved in subcontracting work were considerably worried. British Aerospace, for example, pulled all its subcontract work back in-house, thereby affecting smaller companies. The Defence Manufacturers Association, which does a great deal of work for small companies, made it clear that the issue greatly worried it. I hope that what my right hon. Friend is reputed to have said about advance payments cuts will not affect small companies, and that he will pay particular attention to them. That is all the more important with the United States air force considering expenditure on emerging technologies, especially the advanced tactical fighter, because all those procurement factors will loom large and be vital on this and the other side of the Atlantic.

I cannot mention the European fighter aircraft without paying an enormous tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley and my hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton, and I hope that that will be echoed by many people. I hope that my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State and the new Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement will establish the same close links with their European counterparts as did their predecessors. Can the Minister ensure that my right hon. Friend knows that the roll-out of the first aircraft of the experimental aircraft programme will take place on 17 April 1986, and that my constituents and I want him to be present?

Mr. Lee: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will attend that roll-out.

Mr. Atkins: I shall see my right hon. Friend there with great pleasure.

Will the Minister prevail on our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to be present at Farnborough this year when the EAP flies in competition with the French aeroplane? It will not be competition as such because the EAP will be the better of the two. I should like her to witness that it is the better aeroplane. I hope that she will change her mind and attend.

There are some problems with the EFA which must be resolved. The European staff target formed in August 1985 was for an aeroplane with a weight of 9·75 tonnes, a wing area of 50 sq m and an engine thrust of 90 KNs. The European staff requirement is for a weight of 12·5 tonnes, a wing area of 55 sq m and an engine thrust of 111 KNs. That is basic mass empty. That problem must be resolved because it is almost out of control. The Germans are saying that the radar is too big. That is only one of the problems that springs to mind.

The spoiling tactics of the French relate entirely to their light combat aircraft called the Rafale, and underlie the threat to genuine commonality which is so important to Europe. That must not interfere with the project.

On 28 February there is to be a meeting with the United States on the advanced tactical aircraft and a possible involvement with the EFA in relation to inter-operability and other matters of manufacturing importance. I hope that consideration will be given to the importance of ensuring that the programme is not delayed.

It is vital to hold a meeting of Secretaries of State and Defence Ministers involved in the EFA project as soon as possible to get a grip of the potential problems that face the EFA in terms of weight, wing area and other matters. That is so important that it must be done urgently, and I hope that my hon. Friend will encourage our right hon. Friend to do that. The project is vital, and is the success story of the next decade and beyond. We have already achieved a success story with Panavia and Tornado, and it can be built on with this aeroplane. It, like many other aeroplanes, such as Spitfire and Mosquito, which excited us when we were young, should have a name to capture the imagination. If this project does as well as the Mosquito and the Spitfire, it will be of immense importance to the RAF, to the industry and to the British people.

6.50 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In the past I have always had a great deal of courtesy from the Ministers at the Ministry of Defence and, invariably, courtesy from Ministry of Defence civil servants. I am not grousing too

much, but on the last services day I made a careful and well-prepared contribution to the naval debate on the subject of the logbook of the Conqueror. During and immediately after the debate, I asked just one thing: that I should get a letter pointing to any factual inaccuracies in what I had said. I repeated the request in a letter to the Secretary of State. In the absence of response, do I take it that my speech on that occasion was fully accurate?

I want to speak rather bluntly to hon. Members of all parties. There has been a devaluation of service debates. That may be because of the arrival of the Select Committee on Defence, but some of us are old-fashioned enough to think that questions asked in service debates still deserve answers. It is not only politicians who are at fault for that devaluation, because I remember the time when the late Charles Douglas-Home, who was the defence correspondent of *The Times*, used to sit in the Gallery during Army, Navy and Royal Air Force debates. Now that Gallery is largely unpeopled, so it is not just the politicians; it is journalists too. But it may be a chicken and egg situation.

It is also strange that one Minister is left to do what is seemingly regarded as a bit of a ministerial chore. One understands that his ministerial colleagues may be busy, but some of us remember the time, Mr. Speaker, when you and I were first in this House when three or four Defence Ministers were interested enough to want to hear what their parliamentary colleagues were saying. The service debates are important because they are reported outside and read in the services. The impression given is that Parliament is uninterested in the nuts and bolts of defence, and hon. Members turn up in numbers only when something like the Westland affair is being debated. That is unsatisfactory for political authority.

The issue about the GEC Nimrod was covered fully by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). The Minister said he was consulting NATO about Nimrod. Will we get objective advice from our NATO partners, because there is a heavy commercial pressure for AWACs and some of us would like to sup with a long spoon with the Americans about this. Whatever the teething troubles of Nimrod, we must remember that thousands of jobs, as my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) has repeatedly said, are at stake. We should stick British. The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) raised the matter of section 10. As the Ministry of Defence will know, I raised a case about that and sooner or later my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North will have a question upon it. I hope there will be some resolution of the problem.

My interest in Westland preceded the so-called Westland affair. On 18 November 1985 I went to Westland and was taken round by Mr. Bill Gueterbock and a number of his trade union colleagues. That was long before there was any mention of a defence argument. I am genuinely interested in the future of Westland, and all of us ought to be interested in the future of the British helicopter industry. Perhaps I may be forgiven for saying that I am a little surprised that, after all that has happened in the last three months, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) is not attending this debate, because presumably he has views about helicopters. However, I will let that pass. The brief that the Ministry of Defence has from Westland refers to major changes in defence commitments and says:

> "The ever-increasing cost of defence equipment and manpower set against a decreasing budget could force the Government to make some major decisions on how to meet our defence commitments. If resources prove insufficient, which looks to be the case, then some drastic changes will have to be faced; e.g. a reduction in the size of BAOR and/or in our surface fleet. If land forces are to be reduced in numbers but not in combat effectiveness, is there not an excellent case for a significant increase in helicopters to provide the essential air mobility by which inferior forces can outmanoeuvre larger armies?"

I invite the Government to comment on that Westland view.

I should like to speak about the effect of the SDI research on strategies for the RAF. Why is the memorandum of agreement being kept secret? Is it because the British have got such a good deal that to publish the memorandum would embarrass the United States Government by creating conditions for criticism from United States firms? The Minister smiles. That may be quite near the mark. Or is it the reverse, that Britain has got such a bad agreement that it would embarrass the British Government if it were made known precisely what they had agreed to?

What steps are being taken to extend the concessions or restrictions granted in the SDI memorandum of understanding to all other areas of military co-operation? If the Pentagon is prepared to grant favourable concessions for work on the SDI, why is it not prepared to grant similar concessions to British firms not engaged in star wars research? What steps have the Government taken to ensure that all British firms receive similar favourable treatment?

What price are the Americans paying for political support for the ill-conceived and, as some of us put it, amoral counter-productive militarisation of space? In a debate like this Parliament is surely entitled to know.

Is the SDI programme the pot of gold that Ministers have made out? I am informed by Mr. John Pike of the Federation of American Scientists that, so far, 2,000 contracts have been placed in the United States over the last three years to a total value of $5 billion. Of these only five contracts have had a value in excess of $100 million, and the largest contractor is General Motors, the organisation to which the Prime Minister would like to sell British Leyland. The remaining contracts have an average value of around $1 million spread over a number of years. What is the advantage in what many people see as something of a sell-out for British science?

On 24 February, I asked:

> "Under what national authority United Kingdom companies involved in strategic defence initiative research will be regulated in respect of control of such research."

The Minister replied:

> "Depending on the nature of the contractual arrangements applicable to each piece of work placed in the United Kingdom either US or UK law may apply."

I have put down a further question. It reads:

"if, pursuant to the answer of 24 February, concerning strategic defence initiative research, he will elucidate the nature of the contractual arrangements which may render the contracts subject to United Kingdom or United States law; and if he will give examples of contractual terms in each case."

I would like a full answer to that question because we had better know where we stand legally. I then asked:

"whether approval has been given to the visit of the team led by Paul Hopler from the Pentagon to survey British technology of potential value to the strategic defence initiative programme with a view to its classification."

The Minister of State replied:

> "No request for such a visit has been made."

[Mr. Tam Dalyell]

I then asked:

"what he is doing to safeguard intellectual property rights for British universities and firms involved in the strategic defence initiative programme."

The reply was:

"The memorandum of understanding and supporting documentation related to British participation in the SDI research programme provide satisfactory safeguards on intellectual property rights for universities, research institutions and firms who may participate in the programme."—[*Official Report*, 24 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. *466-67*.]

What safeguards?

If the Pentagon team, led by Paul Hopler, visiting the United Kingdom in March to compile a catalogue of military critical technologies achieves its goals, the critical technologies of expert systems, artificial intelligence, logic programming and parallel processing, deemed essential to the success of SDI, will be subject to retrospective classification and treatment under COCOM rules restricting dissemination to individuals or groups who might be in contact with eastern Europe. At present 16-bit microcomputers such as the IBM-pc are subject to COCOM regulations, and overseas researchers are becoming restricted in access to supercomputers. That is a matter that very much affects the Heriot Watt physics department, which has the contract.

What are the Government doing to monitor contractor and subcontractor negotiations and contractor and subcontractor agreements that are taking place outside the framework of the memorandum of understanding or inside the framework?

I asked about penalty clauses being contained in the memorandum of understanding on the SDI and I refer briefly to an article by Dr. Glyn Ford MEP in *The Guardian* last Saturday. He said:

"First, the memorandum makes a commitment on behalf of the UK Government to provide up to a third of the costs of research agreed on the basis of government to government contracts . . . Secondly, it contains penalty clauses for non-performance that would match these figures in cancellation payments should the programme be abandoned. Thirdly, should technologies be deployed, in consequence of tearing up the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and building up the arms race, they would be deployed first in Europe."

When I asked about that I received the classic parliamentary answer revealing as little as possible, short and truthful in a literal sense, but then the truth has to be chiselled out of the Government.

Are there penalty clauses outwith the memorandum of understanding? For example, are they embedded elsewhere in General Abrahamson's general administrative agreement for implementation of the memorandum? Or do what most of the world would think of as penalty clauses masquerade under some disguised name? Specifically, was Glyn Ford's article in *The Guardian* a load of rubbish? I know Glyn Ford well as a serious marine scientist, a member of the distinguished science policy unit at the university of Manchester and a man who in the past has never, to my knowledge, written ill-informed rubbish. So I am asking whether there is any truth in what Ford was saying, because, if so, we had better know it.

I asked:

"what further implementing instructions were agreed on Monday 17 February by Professor Richard Norman and Lieutenant-General James Abrahamson regarding the strategic defence initiative."

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement replied:

"The document referred to covers administrative arrangements in support of the memorandum of understanding of 6 December 1985 for United Kingdom participation in the United States strategic defence initiative research."

Is the agreement open-ended or is it subject to further agreements?

I asked the Secretary of State:

"what is the basis of United Kingdom participation in the United States space shuttle; and what are the defence implications, including the defence research and development implications?"

The Minister referred to that in his opening speech, but it is not sufficient to say simply:

"We are a customer for the United States space shuttle as a launch vehicle for our military communications satellites Skynet 4A and 4B. The space shuttle itself is a US programme without United Kingdom Government involvement." — [*Official Report*, 24 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. *466-8*.]

Yes, but we are concerned, and, as the Minister said, there is a tag on to this.

The Teal Ruby experimental sensor satellite that is planned for launch by the space shuttle this year will conduct some experiments related to the SDI. Canadian and Australian scientists are participating in Teal Ruby, which involves tracking aircraft as well as missiles. Are scientists from the United Kingdom involved in Teal Ruby, and does their participation extend to missile tracking tests related to the SDI?

I asked the Secretary of State what information the Ministry of Defence has

"about the implications for the scope, nature and costs of strategic defence initiative-related research in United Kingdom institutions of proposals arising from the American strategic defence initiative programme for the development of optical sensors, tracking devices and advanced electronic systems".

The Minister's answer was again inadequate. He said simply:

"As for all technologies open to the United Kingdom for participation through the SDI research programmes there are opportunities for considerable advances. Those potentially involved will take into account such benefits and the resource implications of undertaking such work."

The question obviously follows: to what extent would the involvement of such United Kingdom technologies in SDI preclude their use in the European ESPRIT and EUREKA programmes for civil purposes?

Furthermore, who else is being brought into the SDI programme? There was a report that the Israelis were involved. I checked that up with the efficient member of the scientific staff from the Library, Dr. Poole, and received the answer that:

"Israel was one of the recipients of the Weinberger letter. It went to 13 NATO and four non-NATO countries".

Mr. Wilkinson: What has that to do with the RAF?

Mr. Dalyell: Of course it has to do with the RAF.

The star wars offer has been made to Israel. The article under the by-line of Ian Black in *The Guardian* is substantially correct. That raises all sorts of implications.

What is the Government's understanding of the obligations and limitations on bilateral and international co-operation on ballistic missile defence research on SDI research arising from the ABM treaty?

I realise that article 15 is less of a problem than the additional agreed statement, but are there any obligations on the part of the Government to assist in payment or part-payment of any cost or part costs of any activities arising out of SDI contracts? What information have we had about British companies that have already negotiated contracts related to SDI research? Ministers should be able to

provide a list at least of Government laboratories which are being considered for SDI contracts or to have entered into discussions. That raises real questions for the universities.

Near my constituency the Heriot Watt university is going ahead undertaking SDI-related research, while the university of Edinburgh has said that it will not. That is the official statement of Dr. John Burnett, the vice-chancellor and principal.

In December I asked that members of the department of artificial intelligence should meet Ministers and I gather that that has been done. Since it is precluded by its university from taking this any further a deep issue of university policy arises.

I asked the Secretary of State for Defence:

"when he expects the strategic defence initiative office to write to university vice-chancellors outlining areas of research of interest to strategic defence initative planners; what form the letters will take; what discussions have already taken place with universities about an outline list of research projects; what will be the deadline for universities to submit proposals; and when he expects contracts to be awarded."

The answer was:

"Universities will be kept fully informed along with other interested parties of opportunities for participation in the SDI research programme by correspondence and by the activities of the Department of Education and Science representative working within the SDI participation office in the Ministry of Defence."

That has created — I have a question to the Prime Minister on it — a good deal of questions inside the DES. It may not be the business of DES civil servants to work inside the DES in order to facilitate what many people in the university world see as the militarisation of space. The answer continued:

"The award of contracts will be determined by such factors as the nature and strength of any interest that is shown by individual Universities and their capabilities in the relevant fields."
—[*Official Report*, 19 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. *185*.]

Each university will have to decide for itself precisely what kind of policy there is inside that academic body. It is a real hot potato for Edinburgh, Heriot Watt and many other universities.

Finally, I want to ask four questions about Fylingdales. When is work now scheduled to begin to upgrade the Fylingdales early warning station to phased array status due to begin? Will Britain or the United States be responsible for vetting researchers or firms either involved or bidding for SDI contracts, or at Fylingdales and other sensitive spots? Who will be responsible for the vetting?

Thirdly, what changes are to be made in the ratio of British to United States staff at Fylingdales in order to upgrade?

Will Britain still retain the ability to cut off information from Fylingdales to the United States, and will data from Fylingdales be made available to NATO as a whole, or will it remain confined to the United States and Britain as at present?

I apologise to colleagues for going on at some length and for gabbling to get my remarks on the record. But some of us—the Opposition Front Bench no less than others—are exceedingly concerned about the militarisation of space. It has been put that we are embarking on something as momentous as what happened in the 1940s in relation to the Manhattan project. Some of us are absolutely determined to monitor the detail and the nuts and bolts of what the SDI actually means. I am realistic, and do not expect the Minister to answer my questions when he replies tonight, but I shall continue to nag and be bloody-minded until we at least in writing get ministerial answers to these very real questions.

7.11 pm

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am grateful for the opportunity to address the House on the Nimrod airborne early warning project. I have followed that project ever since I was elected to the House in 1983, because the airframes have been manufactured at Woodford — a plant at which many of my constituents are employed.

The whole House will welcome the six months trial period which my hon. Friend the Minister of State announced earlier, but thereafter the Secretary of State will have to decide whether to abandon nine years of work and commitments, estimated at approximately £1 billion at current prices, or whether to soldier on with the project, with the fear of throwing good money after bad. No hon. Member will envy that decision. In these days of rapid technological advance it is odd to find that the choice facing the Secretary of State still appears to lie between the Boeing AWACS system and the Nimrod airborne early warning system — the same choice that face Lord Mulley, the then Defence Secretary, nine long years ago.

In six months' time, we shall not be starting from the same position as the one from which the Labour Government started in 1977. At that time, Nimrod was little more than a twinkle in the Department's collective eye, and at that time the AWACS system was already working and on offer to NATO. Had we played our cards right in 1977, we would now have full AEW coverage for Britain for a mere £500 million at current prices.

With the benefit of hindsight, the original decision appears to many hon. Members to have been wrong. The RAF wanted AWACS then, and it seems as if it still wants it. Perhaps the Government should have backed the RAF's decision in 1977. I do not propose to go through the reasons why Nimrod was chosen — that is no longer relevant—but it is highly important for the Secretary of State to consider before making his final decision why it is not now operational. That is of vital importance.

I am glad that the Minister of State pointed out earlier that British Aerospace has fulfilled its part of the bargain in relation to the airframes, and that to all intents and purposes all 11 are complete. The work force at Woodford is to be congratulated on a difficult job well done. But what of GEC? Its system is still some way short of the operating standards that the RAF rightly requires, and is many years behind the schedule set in 1977.

Why should that be so? First, it must be recognised that the system that it is developing is the most complex electronics system ever developed in the United Kingdom. The system requirement specification was not finally agreed until October 1980, yet the original idea in 1977 was to complete the system within four years. Clearly, that was always pie in the sky. After all, it had taken 15 years to develop AWACS. How then, in 1977, could it have been considered that a completely new and different system would be completed in just four years?

Secondly, as the Minister of State pointed out, the contract was negotiated on a cost-plus basis. This involved the MOD vetting all items of expenditure, which inevitably led to long delays and left GEC short of test rigs, spares and other test equipment. The Minister of State is to be congratulated on recognising past mistakes and for

[Mr. Tony Favell]

stating that if the project proceeds after six months—I hope that it will—it will be on a fixed cost basis with GEC as prime contractor.

There have been other errors for which the MOD must take its share of the blame. First, the type of radar chosen has the advantage of detecting slow moving and crossing targets, but this has the disadvantage of not differentiating between moving land vehicles and, say, helicopters. This deficiency was pointed out to the MOD in 1977, but the MOD decided not to spend the extra £10 million on a design proposal aimed at removing the problem. This problem must now be faced.

Thirdly, the computer capacity is not large enough to monitor and disseminate information as fast as the RAF rightly demands, given today's conditions. Now the nettle will have to be grasped and a higher speed computer installed. This should not come as any great surprise to the MOD, as the operator functions required have increased from 200 to 600 during the period of development, and it has long been known that a higher speed computer was desirable and essential.

Where do we go from here? We should welcome the fact that the MOD is to seek tenders from other manufacturers. That is praiseworthy, but many of us feel that it will almost certainly be false economy to cancel the Nimrod project now. There are four very good reasons. First, the airframes are virtually complete. Secondly, it is estimated by GEC that only £200 million to £300 million is required to complete Nimrod. It is difficult to estimate the cost of buying AWACS, but it is significant that Saudi Arabia paid $1,700 million for five in 1981. Thirdly, GEC estimates that the continuation of the project would provide 8,000 man years of employment for its skilled work force and suppliers.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My hon. Friend will be aware that about 3,000 of my constituents are employed at GEC Avionics at Rochester. While not much work is taking place on the AEW system at Rochester, he will be aware that GEC's fortunes are very much bound up with that project and that my constituents would suffer substantially — even though they are not directly involved—if that project were cancelled.

Mr. Favell: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I said that I would not venture into the reasons why it was decided to proceed with Nimrod in 1977. There were many bad reasons, but one of the good ones was that it would keep the technology within the United Kingdom. That still applies. It would be a tragedy to lose that technology now, having spent so much and taken so long on a project that is so near to completion.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, there is now a keen and growing interest in the AEW system throughout the world, and in spite of bad publicity on Nimrod in the last year, there is great interest in the GEC Avionics AEW mission system. Some hon. Members were at the Paris air show last year when interest by Lockheed was demonstrated, but interest has also been shown by Aer Italia of Italy, which has decided to select the GEC system as the one most likely to sell in combination with its aircraft.

Lockheed is already co-operating with GEC on a Hercules. AEW and a joint team is now visiting Australia in response to an invitation from the Australian Government. The export opportunities for a British early warning system appear good. The United Kingdom's share of the market could, according to GEC, amount to as much as £1 billion and provide 25,000 man years of employment in the United Kingdom. Perhaps, given our time over again, we would have taken a different course. It is now 1986. Nine years ago the Ministry of Defence and GEC walked down the aisle together—it would be madness to put them asunder now.

7.19 pm

Mr. A. E. P. Duffy (Sheffield, Attercliffe): According to the Defence Estimates, spending for 1985-86 is projected at just over £18 billion. The RAF gets the biggest percentage increase, the Royal Navy's money is held almost constant, but nuclear spending is up sharply as outlays for the new Trident nuclear submarine begin to bite.

All of this will begin to change next year. The Defence Select Committee reported last year that, although defence expenditure in 1986-87 and 1987-88 will grow in cash terms by 2·8 per cent. and 1·8 per cent. respectively,

"the outlook in real terms is gloomy".

Should we not begin to consider intra-European co-operation and transatlantic co-operation? The Minister did not mention the intra-European procurement group, nor the possibilities now opened up on the other side of the Atlantic by the Nunn and Quayle amendments and the Weinberger memorandum.

Clearly, some things in the forces' forward plans will have to go. Which? The previous Defence Secretary ducked the issue. It is plain from his defence statement — the one before us is, after all, his — that he has studiously avoided firm schedules and timetables, thus concealing a deliberate slow-down in the introduction of new equipment into squadron service, as we shall note later. However, in the near future the new Defence Secretary will have to bite the bullet and make choices. Big new programmes in addition to Trident — a new fighter for the RAF, new tanks and artillery for the Army, new helicopters for both the Navy and the ground forces —are all clamouring for slices of a cake that will start to shrink a year from now. Thus, management of the defence budget into the 1990s will present major problems, as I am sure every hon. Member present today will be acutely aware.

The previous Defence Secretary hoped to meet part of the cost by improving the efficiency of his vast organisation, but trimming the tail will not make a very big dent in the planned spending. Trident begins this year to soak up big chunks of cash, and some time within the life of the Government it will become extremely difficult to cancel it. So if it does not go soon, the blows must fall somewhere on conventional forces. Perhaps, with Tornado F2, we see evidence that such blows are already falling in the form of slippage. According to the 1984 defence statement at paragraph 410:

"Later this year the Tornado F2 will join the RAF and crew training for the operational conversion unit at RAF Coningsby will begin."

What have we heard from the Minister today? That 14 aircraft have been delivered to Coningsby and that he hopes that the first squadron will form next year. How is that for slippage? It is only one illustration.

The increasing cost of new defence equipment is leading to more modernisation of existing aircraft or mid-life updates, using the latest missiles, missile guidance systems, radar, aviation electronics and electronic countermeasures. Why was the mention of such mid-life updates confined to Tornado? Why was there no mention, as the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) asked, of Buccaneer, which will be deployed in the maritime role into the next century? What of the two squadrons of air defence Phantoms which will be retained even after Tornado comes into service? They are two prime examples of mid-life updates.

Why are there no progress reports on advanced short-range and medium-range air-to-air missiles. There is a problem with potential overlapping. All of the information shows that the Americans are making faster progress with regard to AMRAAM. Does anyone suppose that the Americans will stop at AMRAAM when they can cope with ASRAAM as well? Why is there no mention of radiation suppression devices, given their growing importance, especially ALARM?

Mr. Norman Lamont: Because I spoke for 42 minutes and therefore deleted many points that are interesting.

Mr. Duffy: The Minister deceives none of his colleagues when he comes out with that nonsense. They recall what he said and that great chunks of his speech could have taken second place to these items. The Minister is smiling in agreement. He mentioned United Kingdom air defence ground environment and he appreciates its importance. He might have mentioned the joint tactical information distribution service, which is equally important. We want progress reports on these extremely important developments. We want to know more about airfield defence. How many Rapier squadrons are now operational? We want to hear something about airfield survivability, not only in terms of sustainability, but also security, given last autumn's Exercise Brave Defender. We want a progress report, and this was the occasion for it.

We have been told that we now have nine squadrons of the Tornado GR1. We had eight a year ago. Only one more squadron in a year? Is that another example of slippage? The Minister will recall, just as the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) will, the anxiety that I have expressed in the past two debates on the RAF about NATO's need to counter Warsaw pact air superiority in the central region. The Minister acknowledged the importance of that when he talked of the increasingly hostile air environment over the central region. The aim must therefore be to free NATO's TACAIR to provide sufficient leverage to offset the Warsaw pact's advantages in numbers.

In the event of an attack, there would be two urgent priorities—to counter air attack and to destroy about 100 key points in Soviet supply lines such as bridges. Soviet aircraft would be best destroyed on the ground. There is a growing consensus in the Alliance that such a mission should be performed with conventional means to raise the nuclear threshold. That is due in part to military considerations and in part to political ones. Militarily, there is a strong need to modernise and strengthen our conventional systems to implement flexible response as a credible deterrent strategy. Bearing in mind the current Soviet strategic and theatre nuclear superiority, we are obliged to consider such a development.

From an industrial point of view, new technologies in guidance, target acquisition and miniaturisation are now expanding the number of missions that conventional weapons can accomplish. For the third successive year, I ask, as does the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood, that the Government move beyond studies into air-launched systems or stand-off weapons for Tornado into the definition and then development of a design. In view of the increasingly hostile air environment of which the Minister spoke, Tornado will clearly experience growing difficulty getting over the target and must therefore have the capability to engage it from some distance. Ballistic missiles could be used on targets, for example. Airstrips could be destroyed by the use of terminally-guided systems releasing more than 100 earth-penetrating bombs which explode underneath the ground. The defence statement of 1983, paragraph 4, claimed that the studies were in hand to assess the conventional armed long-range stand-off missile or complementary systems to manned aircraft. There has been no mention of those studies since then, although I understand that a memorandum of understanding exists with the United States on two new programmes—the long-range stand-off missile and the short range anti-radiation missile. I ask the Minister once again to comment on progress. That is what the House wishes to hear.

In the light of the statement on the Nimrod AEW that the Minister slotted into his speech—I made the official statement to this House as Minister in 1977 on our policy on the Nimrod AEW and I believe that I have no grounds to blush—I wish to offer a different perspective from that which we have heard so far in the debate from both sides of the House. The RAF was encouraged to order Nimrod in preference to the Boeing E3A in 1977 when NATO hesitated to agree to buy the American system, which at that time did not offer the maritime capability that Britain believed to be necessary. At that time the Germans were just as resistant to the Boeing E3A and they went down a slightly different road through a joint venture with Dornier and Boeing.

The objectives were to meet an increasingly sophisticated threat, to co-ordinate tactical air forces and new weapons systems and to achieve inter-operability as well as to link up with tomorrow's systems. We were aware of those needs eight or nine years ago, but, as we have heard this afternoon, those developments have taken a quantum leap. They are vital requirements, because Soviet activity in low-level operations has alredy been observed to be on the increase. Inevitably there have been problems. How far were they compounded by the failure of the RAF fully to assess what was needed, the attitude of the Treasury, which wanted a system on the cheap—a type 42 Frigate muddle all over again—and the shortcomings of industry? How far has the Nimrod experience, like the Westland experience, called into question Britain's ability to go it alone on a project of that size and sophistication?

With the Royal Air Force constantly changing its requirements, the computer originally developed for Nimrod can no longer cope with the work load. I understand that there is also a heat problem because of the sophisticated radar, which in turn has seriously affected Nimrod's mission time. There is now so much equipment on board that they are running out of space. Yet there are extremely well placed authorities that have every confidence that Nimrod AEW will work in time.

[Mr. Duffy]

However, it must be out of the question to cancel the Nimrod programme. The ability of the nation to defend itself is directly related to the ability of industry and the scientific community to maintain a strong technology base needed to develop the systems and services used by the armed forces. Can we really believe that we would be able to carry on doing that if we cancelled the Nimrod AEW programme? It would also be an outrageous waste of money and a retrograde step to buy AWACS. The Nimrod radar, for example, is superior. Ministers must demonstrate more tenacity in their attitudes towards Nimrod.

If technological problems continue, collaboration should be sought with other NATO countries, especially in Western Europe and notably with Dornier in the Federal Republic of Germany. Let us recall the attitude of the Germans to the Boeing E3A. If we must go down that road, let us not hesitate to do so.

7.34 pm

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, West): The first point raised by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and that of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) strike me as important. They repeated the slogans about Trident and the damage that Trident will do to the conventional budget, but at the same time they praised Tornado. Throughout its lifespan, the Tornado programme has taken a much higher proportion of the equipment budget than Trident will. If we can survive Tornado without distortion, I fail to see the strength of the argument about Trident.

I agree with the central point of the hon. Member for Attercliffe about not cancelling Nimrod. AWACS would cost much more on top of what we have already spent, and there are several other reasons. There are important lessons to be learned. Nimrod has shown that above all else we must move away from the cost-plus system as rapidly as possible. It is shot through with anomalies and deep problems.

My hon. Friend the Minister clarified the question of where we shall go during the next six months. However, project management by companies is important. The problems of the Nimrod programme arose from having to go back on a weekly basis to get authorisation from the Ministry of Defence. That is not the way in which to achieve effective management control. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) pointed out that the moratorium on expenditure in 1981 caused severe delays by stopping development and expenditure on the test rig, which set back progress to a considerable extent.

Another lesson has been closely to examine the operation of the procurement executive. My right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) began the essential progress towards a more central organisation in the Ministry of Defence, which will make it more possible to achieve appropriate strategies, including the role of helicopters and early warning systems. The next step is to go further and examine the procurement executive. Mr. Levene has done a tremendous job and has had a good shot at getting a good Nimrod contract, but there is a procurement jungle which needs sorting out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockport stressed that specifications are constantly changing. No clear specification was made at the beginning of the Nimrod programme. We were well into the programme before we had one, and even then it kept changing. As the Minister said, the Government had moved back the requirement —there is now a minimal operational requirement but requirements have been progressively added throughout the programme to beyond the AWACS requirements. We were expecting to achieve completion in half the time of AWACS and at a quarter of the cost.

Mr. Couchman: In December 1985, the chief of defence procurement sent a letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) entitled "Summary of Compliance of Key Characteristics of Performance Required for Minimum Operational Capability". Some of the characteristics in the document had only been defined by the Ministry of Defence within the previous six months.

Dr. Hampson: That was minimum characteristics at the end of the programme, but many others were added. We were trying to achieve something quite exceptional. This is the most complicated electronics programme with which British industry has had to cope. It has had to cope with trying to meet the requirements of a maritime presence, with aircraft carriers being phased out, the northern NATO flank and battlefield requirements. To do all that with a small fuselage is a complicated and difficult task.

It is about time that we gave at least some recognition to the tremendous achievements in the programme. I do not defend the way in which the programme has been handled or the management control, but it is a phenomenal technical achievement. I believe that the programme will succeed.

Yesterday, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) and I examined the project. GEC readily admits that there are faults. One problem is with the shadow on the radar, since it is so precise that it picks up moving cars and trucks. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport said, it was known in 1977 that this was a potential problem, yet the Ministry of Defence said that it did not matter. It was not prepared to pay £10 million to cope with that, and said that that sector of the radar scanner could be blanked out. Last year, the Ministry decided that it needed such a capability. We must examine the way in which the Ministry handles such major projects.

I hope that similar problems will not occur with the staff requirement 1238, which is the air-launched anti-armour rocket. It is another expensive programme, and the companies are saying that they must know where they stand. I hope that the Nimrod fiasco does not mean that the Ministry is becoming scared of launching into such projects. In the 1970s, when we took the decision on Nimrod, it was right to believe that Britain had the capability to carry out such high electronic and technology programmes. What will be the state of British industry if we believe that it is incapable of doing that now? Whatever the mistakes, we must try to sell the Nimrod system.

Last year Lockheed evaluated the programme and said that it was potentially a world winner. Lockheed is prepared to use it in the Hercules C130 and believes that it can be sold successfully throughout the world, with possible profits of between £1 billion and £3 billion, from which there will be some royalties to the Government to compensate them for their large investment. It is important to think positively about the programme. It has received

much bad publicity, which damages morale in the company and in the skilled teams working on the project. It must also affect potential customers and Lockheed. We must try to continue Lockheed's involvement in the programme so that it provides more export possibilities.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): My hon. Friend has made some important points, and I hope that in reply the Minister will give us an assurance that the Government will consider the way in which staff targets are arrived at. There have been some changes in climate in this area and in others, which are rather worrying. The House will be grateful that my hon. Friend demonstrated the export potential of the programme. I hope that we shall continue it and bring it to a successful conclusion.

Dr. Hampson: I am grateful for that intervention, which reinforces my point. My hon. Friend the Minister of State should realise the strength of feeling on the matter. Britain must demonstrate that it can carry out such projects and that they can be successfully concluded. The company is confident that it can achieve success. It says that it is 85 per cent. of the way towards resolving the few problems that exist. We have always been too ready to accept the bad publicity on the project as though the entire Nimrod programme was faulty. But there are 200 separate elements in this highly sophisticated project, only a handful of which have not met the specified requirements. Of course, there is still quite a way to go on those elements, but there have been great achievements as well.

The RAF video shown to Ministers gives a completely false impression of how far the system fails to meet the specifications, because it ignores a large chunk of the capabilities and focuses only on the elements where problems remain. We must view the project positively.

The contract which Mr. Levene managed to achieve is good and satisfactory to all parties. It means that the company must have great confidence in what it is doing, because it will be spending £25 million of its money during the next six months. That is a sign of real commitment. If it does not deliver on time or up to performance, it will have to continue spending its own money. I pay credit to my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley on taking the initiative last June and July in pressing for this type of contract with penalties on the company. Otherwise the cost-plus system would have continued almost indefinitely, to no one's advantage.

At the end of the six months, there must be no protracted analysis of the alternatives. The procurement executive has done that many times, most recently with helicopters. We have still not sorted out the Army's requirements. The Ministry has postponed reviews and revised specifications. It would be wretched, to say the least, if after six months evaluation of the alternatives was continued. There is only one alternative—AWACS. The Hawkeye is as ineffective now for our requirements as it was in the 1970s, when we decided not to have it. The P3C — the Lockheed Orion — is just a speck in the imagination. No money has been committed to it, and there are no contracts in sight for it. We should have to wait years for any such alternative.

I see no need for excessive delay or an appraisal of the alternatives, which only helps competitors. It is a choice between AWACS and continuing with what we have. Most of my colleagues will endorse my view that we should give GEC the chance to prove that Britain can produce something that will sell well round the world.

7.45 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): This is an opportunity for us to pay tribute to the men and women of the Royal Air Force. We shall talk a great deal tonight about equipment, but we must never forget about the men and women who man and maintain that equipment, in the snows of the Falklands or wherever it may be, and who maintain the standards of this fine service of which every hon. Member is proud. We hear mostly of the exploits of the aircrews, but we should never forget the people behind them in the air bases in Britain, Germany and elsewhere. They show much skill and professionalism. Only occasionally does the service catch the public eye, with an especially daring and successful rescue by a helicopter from a storm-tossed ship, or with the great aid that the RAF provided in Ethiopia, with its low-level Hercules dropping relief supplies to those in distress.

Those of us who visit the United States see another side to the Air Force. At the enormous range at Nellis, in the desert outside Las Vegas, where the American air force holds its large Red Flag exercises and displays all its great technology, skill and resources, the Royal Air Force performs exceptionally well. During the past year, our most notable success in the States was for the Tornados to win some of the top prizes in the American air force annual bombing competition. The V bombers used to enter those competitions and also won some of the top prizes. Now the new Tornado squadrons have shown their capabilities on the Americans' home ground by winning some of the highest prizes competed for by the cream of the American air force. It was a very commendable performance.

I pay special tribute to the crews who took part so skilfully in the refuelling of the Hercules aircraft bound for the Falkland Islands day after day, long after the war had finished. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) had personal experience of their efforts and skill on his flight, as did other of my colleagues. It was a great feat of aviation to continue that air bridge in appalling conditions, thousands of miles out in the south Atlantic and with no easy alternative airport to direct to if things went wrong. Friends of mine said that one could not expect it to be done for a long period without something going wrong and it was a fine feat of airmanship to do it day after day without any serious problems or accidents. It speaks a great deal for the skill of the aircrews involved.

On flight refuelling, I am pleased that we are increasing our capacity with the new VC10s and TriStars coming into service. It means the end of the Victor tankers, the last of the old V bombers, which have been with us for many years. However, it is interesting to reflect that the Olympus engine still leads the world in Concorde, even though the V bombers may have gone.

Flight refuelling is an essential part of our air power. It is a great force multiplier. It increases many times the capability of our fighters and attack aircraft, since they need not return to base to refuel. They can stay much longer on station and operate at much greater distances from their bases.

Whether we talk of the RAF strike aircraft or of its fighters, we are nowadays talking of the Tornado. Most of the strike variants are in service and the fighters are starting to enter into service. It is undoubtedly a great aircraft. Its greatest ability is, perhaps, its all-weather capability because we have a great deal of bad weather in

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

Europe and long winter nights. In the Tornado we have an aircraft that can fight whether the weather is fine or foul and by day or night.

When I visited Nellis I was particularly impressed by the skill of our Buccaneer crews. In the middle of the American western desert, it was a day of torrential rain —not at all what one expected. I had just been seeing the latest in head-up displays and automation in the most modern of the American fighters. The Buccaneer crews came out of the hangars, and off they went, in that appalling weather when most of the aircraft belonging to their hosts were not flying.

When they returned, I asked whether I could see their head-up display and their automation. The group captain took me over. There was no automation. For a head-up display, there were two old-fashioned dials. One showed the height and the other the speed. They had been screwed on to the top of what I would call the dashboard. Those aircraft are elderly but they can operate in bad weather because of their skilled crews. The Tornado can do this much more easily day after day. It will be the RAF's backbone into the next generation.

There is no doubt that the biggest equipment problem facing us is the lack of an airborne early warning aircraft. It is not surprising that many hon. Members have commented on that fact. The old Shackleton mark 2 is a piston-engined aircraft which is considerably older than many of the people flying in it. It is not even the latest model of Shackleton. It was in service when I was in the Air Force many years ago. I seem to remember that in those days, 30 years ago, it was referred to as 60,000 rivets pulsating in unison. I do not know whether they are in unison these days.

The Shackleton was never a comfortable aircraft in which to serve. I pay great tribute to the crews who continue to do so day after day. Without saying too much about it, its radar is based on 1940s technology. Let us just say that it is of limited capability in this modern age.

The lack of a modern airborne early warning aircraft is a giant hole in our defences and it must be plugged. It is not merely a force multiplier enabling the fighter force to be controlled more effectively. One must bear very much in mind that ground radar stations are extremely vulnerable to attack. They would not last any time at all in a war. The people underneath in the hardened concrete defended control rooms would be all right, but the radar heads would go quickly. We shall be left without an effective radar system unless we have airborne early warning aircraft. They are absolutely vital to this country's defences.

I do not believe that there is any hon. Member who wishes the Nimrod other than well. We all want to see it succeed. The paramount point is that we cannot force the Royal Air Force to accept an aircraft that does not have the vital radar capability we need. That is not being unnecessarily pessimistic about the future of Nimrod. I earnestly hope that it can be made to do the job successfully. We are plainly correct to continue to attempt to achieve that.

If I remember the figures correctly, the Nimrod programme costs about half that of the current torpedo programme. We tend to see the figures as gigantic which, of course, they are, but if we remember that buying a new stock of torpedoes for the Royal Navy will cost twice as much as we have so far spent on the Nimrod, it puts the matter more into perspective.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I am told that it cost £800 million to launch the Ford Sierra. That might put the point in perspective.

Mr. Trotter: That is another good figure with which to compare the programme.

We must persevere and ensure that the radar warning gap is successfully plugged. I am not too worried whether the Nimrod is capable of operating as a controller of battles in the middle of Europe because I do not think that that is what it will be used for. It will be needed for the air defence of this country and the waters around it.

We must ensure that our expensive new aircraft are matched by effective modern weapons. It is said that one aircraft with a modern "smart bomb" has the same effect as a squadron of 12 aircraft dropping 60 or more conventional unguided bombs. There is a huge advantage in having to send only one plane since only it and one crew are at risk in the hostile environment which has been referred to. These weapons are a multiplier of the inevitably limited forces that we shall have available and are quite essential.

There are some splendid modern weapons already in service, now coming into service and under development. Our industry has been highly successful in designing and producing these weapons. The JP 233 for cratering runways is well in service. The air-launched anti-radar missile is coming along well. Now, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, air staff requirement 1238 is for a new anti-armour weapon with terminally guided submunitions. Those weapons are all essential. They must be available in adequate numbers if we are to give the greatest advantage to the Tornado crews. Those crews must not be put into the unnecessary position of having to go into a heavily defended area to drop old unguided and inaccurate bombs if the job can be done at much less risk to them and their aeroplanes with smart weapons. That makes sense from the cost point of view apart from any other arguments.

The arguments about helicopters have been well put by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I find it hard to believe that we can wait until the late 1990s for the European tactical transport helicopter to replace our existing ageing machines. We must make a decision well before then. The dividing line between the Army and the Air Force needs studying. There are good arguments for the Air Force operating the helicopters that it does, but the matter does need studying. As an accountant—one of those cold, calculating types — I must say that the figures that my hon. Friend the Minister gave us on the comparative costs of helicopter training require some inquiry. The fact that the Army spends only £200,000 per pilot while the Air Force spends £2 million is something that should be looked at. I should like to know what the Navy spends on its training. That should be an interesting figure because its pilots are mostly helicopter pilots these days and they operate in difficult conditions at sea.

We perhaps hear most about aircrew, but without the support in the bases they would be unable to operate. Half the Royal Air Force is in Support Command. It is responsible for flying training, technical training, maintenance, the deep repairs of the aircraft and the supply

of all the stores that keep the Air Force operating. Each year, 2 million stores are issued. That is a mighty and well-run organisation. The destruction of its headquarters by fire at Brampton must have been an appalling problem for those running the command. Tribute is due to all those who worked so hard to overcome the problems, the scale of which is hard to imagine, with all the records destroyed.

I caution my hon. Friend about the overstretch of manpower. There are signs that this is becoming a problem. We have seen a welcome increase in the front line aircraft strength of the Royal Air Force as a result of the Government's determination and the substantial increase in defence spending. These increases in aircraft strength have not been matched by corresponding increases in manpower. We shall have to watch the problem of this overstretch carefully. At times it has been aggravated by cuts in the number of civilians employed. It is all very well to reduce civilian strength if the job can be dispensed with, but it is not so good if someone in uniform has to do that job as well as his normal job.

In conclusion, I shall refer to the remarks of John Slessor, a famous head of the Royal Air Force 40 years ago. His remarks were in the context that the Royal Air Force, alone of the three services, operated in every environment: maritime, land battle and the defence of these islands. John Slessor said:

"Unless we command the air over these islands we are done for, even more certainly than we should have been last time; unless we have air superiority in the battle zone it does not matter how many TA or other sort of divisions we have, they will not avail; unless we can protect our convoys we shall starve . . . strength in the air . . . is absolutely vital to our existence as a nation."

That is as true now as it was when he said it 40 years ago.

8 pm

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate on the Royal Air Force. Later this year I shall have worn the blue uniform of the Royal Air Force for 40 years. As I am the only serving reserve officer in either House, I have a particular interest in the Royal Air Force, from both personal and direct experience.

On the day when the Spitfire is 50 years old I recollect that I served in the days of the piston-engined aeroplane. I was never fortunate enough to serve in a Spitfire squadron. However, that was rectified at a later stage in my career. The Spitfire symbolises for everybody what the Royal Air Force means to the country. It means more than just a beautiful aeroplane that did its job very effectively. In 1940 it meant the difference between survival and non-survival. Afterwards it gave us the air superiority that we required in so many battlefield theatres. No other flying machine of its type anywhere else in the world equalled it. It is fitting, therefore, that we should be holding this debate today.

I wish to make special mention of an old colleague and friend of mine. He is the commanding officer of the Royal Air Force Battle of Britain Flight. When I see Scott Anderson and his team at air shows my heart takes a leap. I am reminded again of the great victories of the Royal Air Force throughout the years. Long may the Royal Air Force continue to operate the Battle of Britain Flight and long may we continue to see them at all air displays.

I do not intend to refer to subjects that have been dealt with by other speakers, but I am pleased that the Tornado is coming into service. I am a little worried that it is not coming into service as fast as I should wish, but I am pleased that the F2 version of the fighter is coming into service. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will be able to tell me what stage the Hawk local air defence programme has reached. We need an effective air defence programme.

I am also pleased to note that the Royal Auxiliary Air Force has been given an increased role to play in air defence matters. I shall refer to other aspects relating to auxiliaries and reserves, but the experience that we have gained thus far with auxiliary units in air defence is good. People of high calibre are being recruited. I have always believed that the Royal Air Force could attract such people; now the evidence is there for everybody to see.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to overcome the objections to increasing the volunteer reserve and the auxiliary component of the Royal Air Force. The use of volunteers and reserves represents good value for money. They will perform this role for what, in relative terms, are peanuts. They do it because they want to do it. That is what matters. Very expensive aeroplanes are being flown today and it is important that those who fly them should be properly motivated. It is not enough to have the skill and the ability to fly these aircraft. Experience shows that, unless people are properly motivated, their skills will not be used to the best advantage. Motivation is the most important aspect of flying. Unless one likes flying, one ought not to do it, particularly in the modern environment.

A great deal has been said about the Nimrod. I agree that the Nimrod AEW aircraft ought to go into service with the Royal Air Force. I was surprised to hear certain hon. Members say earlier that the Royal Air Force does not want it. That is not what the RAF has told me. It says that it wants an aircraft that will do the job properly.

It will come as no surprise to the Minister to hear that, after having spent a large part of my life in the air training environment, I want the trainer that is to come into service with the RAF to do the job that the RAF wants it to do. I should like to know whether the problems relating to the marrying of the engine to the airframe have been overcome.

I should like the Minister to comment in particular on the following matters. Have the difficulties relating to the variable rates of wind-up been resolved? Have the problems over the retraction of the nose wheel when the new engine is mounted been resolved, and also the problems relating to reverse thrust and the possibility of it being engaged in flight? Furthermore, has the very high rate of sink in the final stages of landing been properly dealt with? Can my hon. Friend the Minister tell me at what time, and when, Boscombe Down will get its hands on the modified trainer so that its capabilities can be ascertained? My hon. Friend the Minister will be pleased to know that Boscombe Down is anxious to get its hands on it.

Unfortunately, one has to draw attention to the cost implications of this aircraft. I want to be absolutely certain that the Royal Air Force budget will not have to meet any additional costs that are incurred by purchasing this aeroplane. Reference has been made to the cost of the Jet Provost overrun. Whoever pays, it must not be the Royal Air Force. An aircraft was bought off the shelf at a certain price. There was an alternative that could also have been bought at a certain price. Until the Royal Air Force can get its hands on the Tucano and properly evaluate it—it

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is not called the Tucano at the moment but the PC4½ because it is only half as good as the PC9, which I do not like—it will not be possible to make it into a good trainer. It will eventually be a good trainer, but my concern is that the Royal Air Force budget should not be required to bear the cost. It means that other projects would suffer.

National Air Traffic Services has been causing me some concern. This body is run by the Royal Air Force and the Civil Aviation Authority. I hope that the Minister realises that a person with my background does not take kindly to having to say things that are less than complimentary about the Royal Air Force. I care deeply about it. My wife insists that that is the only real love that I have ever had. Regular serving officers who work within National Air Traffic Services should be reminded that Parliament is part of our democratic process. They may not like parliamentarians asking awkward questions and getting involved in difficult issues, but that is the price we pay for living in a democracy. It is a price that I am very happy to pay and I hope that they are happy to pay it, too. Their perceived attitudes towards consultation in the NAT-MAC forum are less than happy. It could be argued that this is because I speak on most occasions only on behalf of one body, the British Gliding Association. However, I have many other interests in both light aviation and private aviation. I am a director of a company that is involved in activities of that kind. NAT-MAC is not perceived to be pursuing the role that Parliament wants it to play. That is not good. It can introduce regulations without referring to Parliament. That is bad. Unless the consultations are meaningful, Parliament will have to introduce legislation that will allow it to have a greater say.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): My hon. Friend may not know that I have received representations that express the grave concern of glider pilots. They will find that their area of operations is severely curtailed, particularly in Oxfordshire, because of restrictions that are widely thought to be unnecessary.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful intervention. Upper Heyford, which is the airfield involved, is presently used and occupied by the United States air force. I have always found the United States air force helpful, constructive and willing to sit down and talk about matters, so anything I have to say must not be seen as any form of criticism of the United States air force—in fact quite the reverse. I have been to the United States embassy and I have had constructive discussions about the problems of Upper Heyford and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) will be pleased to hear that.

The real difficulty with regard to Upper Heyford is not that we have simply had an area of 200 square miles or more made effectively sterile. It has become an area where one has to ask permission to go in and do things and in the centre of England that is not very clever. If an airfield of that size was required for recovery patterns—for those who do not understand that, it means the aircraft getting back to the aerodrome and the Royal Air Force does not have recovery patterns that cover anything like that area—and if it was perceived that because the F111 has certain visual problems when flying—I accept that they are not the easiest aeroplanes to see out of—it was not terribly clever to put them in the centre of England in the first place. These are not large islands. Airfields were available 15 years ago, although some of them have since been given up by the Royal Air Force, but they were available and perhaps the F111 should have been put in an area which would have caused fewer problems.

The difficulty is that the evidence of the problem is not based on hard fact. If it were, I as an aviator would accept it. I believe that no aviator, regardless of where he comes from or whom he represents, wants to fly in conditions that are deemed to be less than safe. Anecdotal evidence is being used—anyone who has operated out of an operational airfield will know that the anecdotal evidence on any operational airfield is that things are never quite what the chaps want—but that is not a good enough reason to bring in legislation to change things.

I must place on record my thanks to my noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support, who has been very helpful on that matter. We are continuing to have a constructive dialogue, so I am hopeful that we will find a sensible compromise answer.

I would like to say a few words about helicopters. I think that the one thing that clearly came out of the Westland saga was that throughout all of it Sikorsky behaved very properly. There is no question that it became involved in the many unfortunate publicity activities. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will take it on board that, whatever happens now, we have to recognise that Westland is our only helicopter supplier. It is nonsense for anyone to suggest that it would not be considered for supplying any helicopter that would be operated and flown by our defence forces in whatever category. Of course Westland must be considered. If we are serious about the needs of the Army in battlefield conditions, Westland, in conjunction with the long, useful and constructive experience of Sikorsky, will, I am confident, be able to produce the helicopter to meet that task. I believe that one is already in existence.

I now turn to the Chipmunk. I hope that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench will recognise that it is not a young aeroplane. It made its first flight in about 1948. It is a fine aeroplane but there is now a need to re-engine it and carry out various changes in the cockpit equipment. That being so, I strongly recommend that we look at some of the new British products which are available for that sort of role. That would be helpful to the British companies and, in addition, it would give the Royal Air Force a new generation of aeroplanes. If I mention Slingsby's Firefly I hope that no one will think that I am biased. It is a nice aeroplane. The Trago Mills is also a good aeroplane. I strongly recommend that both those aircraft are properly evaluated as a replacement for the Chipmunk. My colleagues in the reserve who fly Chipmunks will be pleased to fly whatever they get, but they would happily fly new aeroplanes rather than old ones refurbished.

I want to make some suggestions about the reserve forces and their structure. I want to say to the Ministry of Defence that the time has now come when there is an awakening in the recognition of the fundamental role that proper auxiliary and reserve units can carry out in the time of war. Some auxiliaries and reserves can go into operational squadrons at short notice, provided they are used in that role. I welcome the changes that are taking place so that there will now be opportunities for people to become involved. More importantly, we need a unified command structure of the kind we enjoyed when Home Command existed so that all those who are involved in the

reserve and auxiliary activities have a structure through which their needs and requirements can be met. That would do a number of things. It would mean that one had an oversight of all that auxiliaries and reserves were doing and the problems of payment and expenses could be dealt with effectively. More importantly, it would give regular serving RAF officers career opportunities directly linked to auxiliary and reserves.

In some areas within the service there is still a feeling that a job connected with the auxiliaries or reserves is somehow not a good prospect for a career. For those in the service today who are concerned about that, may I say that one of my great friends is a serving air marshal? He largely owes his career to the great job he did many years ago in the early 1960s when he was a squadron leader working inside an auxiliary and reserve set-up. It was that, which was his first squadron leader appointment, which led to him now occupying one of the top posts in the Royal Air Force.

Therefore, working with the auxiliaries and reserves does not mean that one will not be considered for high rank in the Air Force. In fact, the reverse is true. It is also worth remembering that the auxiliaries and reserves are people like myself. One may just bump into the odd Member of Parliament—at the moment only one, but I hope there will be many more. One would certainly bump into the opinion formers and others who are influential throughout the country.

I am pleased to note that the service is initiating trials to test the augmentation of front line squadrons with RAFVR aircrew. My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn and my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), the air commodore of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force Regiment Squadron, will be pleased to note that it is also considering the deployment of RAFVR qualified flying instructors on university air squadrons and the deployment of a new Royal Auxiliary Air Force support force. I believe that they are all positive and good moves and good news.

There is an enormous source of untapped wealth, and I wish the Royal Air Force could make better use of it. If we do that, the money will be spent more wisely. It will benefit regular service employees who will have greater opportunities. That is the message that I wish to leave with my hon. Friends on the Front Bench. Let us have more of the auxiliaries and the reserves, because they are good for the regular service.

8.18 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I shall try to be brief; most subjects have been covered in the debate. However, there is one subject which has almost become a taboo which no one dares to mention but which I think merits serious consideration. That subject is the reintroduction of conscription. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) rightly expounded with great authority the merits of the reserve forces. I find it noteworthy that in our defence posture our reserves in the United Kingdom are so meagre. We spend £18,000 million on our defence, but the Army has only £360 million for its reserve, the Navy only £14 million and the Air Force only £30 million. This means that the sustainability of our armed forces in time of war would be greatly diminished.

I shall not weary the House too much now, but I have always argued that it would be much better for the defence of our country if our naval and air reserves were greatly strengthened. We have seen from the experience of the United States Air Force reserve and Air National Guard how effective these reservists can be. They fly supersonic aeroplanes, for example F15 and the F16. The Israelis also operate with their reserve air crews the very latest aircraft to the highest operational capability.

If we are not fully to develop that same potential, and we have not hitherto, we should at this time of high unemployment look at the benefit to the country as a whole of the reintroduction of conscription. It is interesting and singular that we, almost alone of the major western European countries, do not have national service. The other countries that do not are Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Iceland, Ireland, Andorra and San Marino. I do not think that, in view of the size of the Soviet threat and the continuing political commitment to the defence of the central front which we maintain, our posture can, on present financial projections, be very long sustained.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has courageously decided that he will re-examine the financial consequences of the current strategy and the consequences of the equipment programmes that he has inherited from his predecessor. He has also informed the House that there is to be no major defence review. The broad strategic objectives are to be sustained. That is, we are to maintain the independent nuclear deterrent, we are to have the Brussels treaty commitment of a standing force on the continent of Europe of no less than 55,000 men plus a tactical Air Force, a commitment to the defence of the eastern Atlantic and Channel Command areas with our fleet, the defence of the United Kingdom air defence region with our Air Force and a continuing capability to project power out of area. I presume that there will be for some time to come internal security operations too in Northern Ireland. All this is to be done on a defence budget that, from now on, will decline somewhat in real terms.

My hon. Friend the Minister quite rightly took credit for the fact that this Administration have reduced the proportion of the defence budget which is allocated to manpower and increased the proportion that is allocated to equipment. Some 46 per cent. of the budget is allocated to equipment as against 35 per cent. to pay, allowances and pensions. However, if we are to recruit men and women of the highest calibre in the highly competitive market place in which we have to seek the recruits that we need, it will be difficult unless we offer high salaries. Already, the services are beginning to feel the pinch, and in certain skill categories there are shortages. This problem will get worse.

We also rightly recognise the role that the armed forces can play in educating, in the broadest sense, our young people—giving them skills, training and experience of work away from home in an ordered and structured environment, having to defer to authority and learning social behaviour and patterns of social responsibility which will be of great value to them in later life. To their credit, some employers recognise this, but not enough as yet.

In the United States, employers are keen to employ members of the Air National Guard and United States air force reserve, because such people are twice the citizens. They are making a commitment to their country through their military services and to the economy through their

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ordinary civilian work. This broadening of experience could well merit serious examination here by our military planners.

Our strategy, which is so much beholden to the Brussels treaty commitment on the central front, is manpower intensive. The pillargrams in the Defence Estimates show that the longest single item for manpower is ground forces in central Europe. If this continues to be the central pillar of our defence strategy, and for political reasons it appears to be so, other commitments will have to go. I should have thought that such a strategy was more applicable to a nation with conscription and large forces than to one with relatively small, all-professional, all-regular forces such as ours.

Our pattern of manpower is applicable more to a country that relies primarily on sea power and air power and the projection of highly mobile, trained professionals out of area in a hurry than to a manpower-intensive strategy on the central front. If it is the decision of Her Majesty's Government that the central front should have priority, we may have to reconsider our manpower policies accordingly.

The armed services youth training scheme has been initiated. The take-up has not been good, but it is a step in the right direction. We also acknowledge the valued role played by the cadet forces in training our young people and broadening their experience. No one wants a return to the the days of "The Virgin Soldiers" and the national service of pre-1960 that some of us knew.

The armed forces would be reluctant to revert to national service. They would say that a high proportion of their manpower would be absorbed by training units and the front-line formations would be denuded of the highly experienced and well trained personnel which they need to make them effective. However, as a consequence we would have more contact between the civil community and the military, the civil community would acquire for its young people a corpus of discipline and collective loyalty that might help to cure some of the violence in our big cities and the phenomena such as football hooliganism and so on. I do not know—I surmise, conjecture, and make no firm prognostications—but I feel that the idea merits examination.

Last but not least, it would be more in keeping with the sense of responsibility for national defence that all our other European NATO fellow members feel. They all believe that national service is a sacrifice, a duty to country which it is reasonable to ask their young people to make. I know that Canada and the United States are different—and they have all volunteer forces, as we do —but in Europe, both east and west of the iron curtain, national service predominates.

We used to rely on our independent nuclear deterrent as this country's main and primary contribution to the western defence effort. As a consequence we felt that it was not necessary to spend so much on manpower and on maintaining large reserves and big formations. That position could be changing.

I urge Her Majesty's Government, in the light of the high level of unemployment, the lawlessness in our cities and the sense of frustration among young people, to ask the planners in the Ministry of Defence to reconsider conscription and to ask whether the armed forces could fulfil such a social role. This role would be of great benefit to the country's defence, and the Royal Air Force, with its wide range of technical skills, could have a primary social role to play as its technical skills are easily translated into lucrative employment in the civil sector.

8.30 pm

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) has made a most informed and thoughtful intervention in the debate as he always does in aviation matters. I very much agree with his remarks about conscription. Conscription is a subject which many people consider to be taboo and which must not be discussed. I believe my hon. Friend has touched upon a most important point and I hope that he will find greater support for his argument not only in the House but among other defence forces.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) in praising those people in the Royal Air Force who do not usually get credit, those who work in the background. Today I visited the London air traffic control centre with several colleagues and met some of the men and women who, day and night, man the air traffic control service with their civilian counterparts. They ensure that our skies are kept safe. It was pleasant to meet so many young ladies who serve as air traffic controllers. Those of us who occasionally fly will know how pleasant it is to hear their voices at the other end of the line because their voices tend to be much clearer than those of their male counterparts.

When we last debated the Royal Air Force a year ago, there were three main issues—the new basic trainer, the European fighter aircraft and Nimrod AEW. Two of those issues have been resolved and one remains outstanding. I would like to recap the arguments on those issues.

As I said earlier to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), I entirely supported the choice of aircraft that he espoused as the new basic trainer for the RAF. That aircraft was the best available and just what the RAF wanted. However, the decision was taken — rightly or wrongly — that the Tucano should be adopted and I hope that the House will give every support to Short Brothers in its attempt to make that aircraft the best that the RAF can hope to obtain. I spoke to Short Brothers on the telephone this afternoon and was told that not only was the maiden flight successful but the plane has undertaken over six hours of flight and so far everything has gone according to plan, and no vices have appeared. I hope that the House will welcome that.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) in their remarks about the implications for the Royal Air Force budget of any costs involved in the slippage in the Tucano programme. I hope that the Minister will be very severe with his supplier and ensure that any slippage is kept to a minimum. Every month that the Jet Provosts continue to fly they are draining resources away from valued areas of the Air Force.

I welcome the PC9. Even if it was not successful in Royal Air Force terms, it was successful as part of the Saudi deal, which was masterminded from the United Kingdom. I was absolutely delighted with that programme and that the enormously beneficial contract has been signed despite some unhelpful remarks in the press a few months ago. That programme is vital to aerospace industries in the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy.

That contract strengthens our ties with an old middle east ally and also means that we continue the connection between British Aerospace and Saudi Arabia which proved so successful with the earlier Lightning programme.

I would also like to pay a tribute to the Royal Air Force for the role that it is performing in training Saudi pilots. The Royal Air Force has adopted that role with enthusiasm, despite the inevitable impact that that will have on its own training requirements. I would particularly like to mention my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's role in securing the contract. My right hon. Friend brought the contract to fruition in the final stages. That contract is undoubtedly one of the biggest job creation programmes that has so far been undertaken and almost 50,000 jobs will be safeguarded through the winning of it.

The contract has also ensured that the production line at Warton, which had a lull between the ending of the Tornado programme and the beginning of the EFA programme, will continue at full steam. It is no accident that in the debate a year ago and in subsequent debates on the European fighter aircraft it was hon. Members who are present today who impressed on the Government the importance of proceeding with the EFA negotiations to bring them to a speedy conclusion. I congratulate all those who took part in that, but I feel that the matter could have been resolved sooner had we not spent so much time trying to get the French on board. Nevertheless, credit where credit is due—the programme has gone ahead and I was encouraged by the Minister of State's remarks about the programme.

I hope that the Minister of State will not use the Saudi order as an excuse for pushing back the EFA timing and will keep the EFA timing up to scratch to ensure an in-service date of 1995.

The EFA programme shows the benefit of collaboration. If collaboration can reduce costs and assist in the process of NATO harmonisation, that is desirable, but collaboration is not an end which must be pursued in itself. If the French are to come on board at some point in the programme, that must happen on terms that are wholly acceptable to the existing partners and not simply for the purposes of collaboration. It must be for the purposes of producing the right aircraft. As my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-West (Mr. Hampson) said a year ago, collaborative programmes tend to slip but I hope this one will not.

When my hon. Friend replies to the debate, will he reassure us that we shall derive some benefit from the considerable expense placed in the Panavia and Namma programmes as the administrative arm of the Tornado operation? An enormous learning curve has been undertaken on that which would be of enormous benefit to the EFA programme if we can use the successful partnership arrived at in Panavia to reduce the costs of the EFA collaboration.

I will not weary the House with remarks about Westland. I hope that we can now move to discuss the European helicopter industry and that we will not again be placed in a position where the future of the European helicopter industry until the end of the century is decided at one meeting. That is not the right way to proceed. Now that the battle over Westland is out of the way, I hope that we can proceed rationally and remind ourselves that Westland is a British and not an American company and that it remains committed to the one collaborative programme in Europe which is going ahead — the EH101. I hope that we can build on that and ensure that Westland continues to participate in further collaboration in Europe should that come to fruition.

On AST404, I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) who made some very telling points. There is a clear need to sort out who runs these helicopter fleets. There is also a clear need for a tactical battlefield helicopter of the W30 or Black Hawk variety. I hope that neither will be ruled out as a result of the unhappy history of the past few months.

The Government's record in relation to the RAF is excellent, as is their commitment to the defence of our realm. Winding up last year's debate, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State reported that in the current year £3,500 million was being spent on RAF equipment. On all headings—defence expenditure as a percentage of GDP, total defence expenditure and per capita defence expenditure — we are second or third after the United States. That is the importance that the Government attach to the defence of our country.

It is important to point out the extent to which the United States provides part of our defence shield. Without the United States presence in Europe, in part so hotly disputed by the Greenham women and others, the British taxpayer would have to pay much more and there would be much less money for hospitals, schools and social services.

The Government's record on United Kingdom purchases is also excellent. In the past five years, 80 per cent. of requirements have been procured in the United Kingdom, 15 per cent. collaboratively and only 5 per cent. overseas. As a result of competitive tender, we have obtained the most cost effective value for money. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, who speaks for the official Opposition today, should contrast that and Opposition statements on other matters in recent months with the Labour Government's decision when the TSR2 tactical strike reconnaissance available to the United Kingdom armed forces was cancelled in favour of a "buy American" policy. In fact, the F111 was cancelled and replaced by the Phantom, which has done sterling work. Nevertheless, that aspect must be borne in mind.

In conclusion, the reduced cost of the new basic trainer and lower oil prices mean that there is some latitude in the RAF budget. The importance of reserves to our defence capability has been mentioned. I look forward to the day when we have a parliamentary air wing in which I can participate with my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) and other Members so that we can play our full part in doing our bit for the defence of the realm. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will think seriously about the further developments that can be undertaken for the reserves.

8.42 pm

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): The pangs of hunger have driven many hon. Members from the Chamber, but those of us who remain have listened with great care to my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth). I join him in his tribute to the Government's achievements for the RAF since they took office. I also echo what he said about AST404, to which I shall refer in a moment. I also endorse my hon. Friend's response to the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) who so often captures the mood of the House in these matters.

[Mr. Keith Best]

I have always taken the view that one should never have military conscription for social reasons, but my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood was right to suggest that more and more hon. Members—on both sides, I suspect—are considering more deeply whether there might not be a role for conscription, if only devoted entirely to the provision of forces on the central front in Europe where they would stand alongside conscripts from other NATO nations and against conscripts from the Warsaw pact countries. That may be yet forced upon us as a result of manpower shortages. I referred to the shortage in the Royal Navy in the recent debate on that service. Reference has been made today to shortages in the RAF and we know that there are shortages in the Army to the extent, unfortunately, that we cannot man all of our own tanks.

My hon. Friend the Minister will remember that in last year's debate we crossed swords in a friendly way about the RAF basic trainer. He will be relieved to hear that I do not intend to fight old battles. I shall not mention the Firecracker, nor even the Spitfire. A number of us were aware of the 50th anniversary of the Spitfire, but it was good of the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) to mention it and to give the House the benefit of his valuable experience in these matters. I hope, however, that we shall not be reduced to redeploying the Spitfire.

I have the privilege to represent RAF Valley in my constituency where all the fast jet pilots go after completing their basic trainer course. At RAF Valley they go on to the Hawk jets. Only a month ago, I was privileged to be asked to present wings to two outgoing courses. I was particularly impressed by the quality of the young fliers there. All but two were graduates, many with degrees in aeronautical engineering or associated subjects. More in retrospect than in anticipation, I was also pleased that on the previous day I had been given the opportunity to go up in a Hawk aircraft. I am not sure that I should say this in the House, but I was allowed to take the controls for a while. It was a marvellous experience and demonstrated to me how responsive the aircraft is. My hon. Friend the Minister of State looks rather concerned. I should add that the aircraft was also flown by a qualified RAF pilot who has just spent three years with the Red Arrows and knew the aircraft extremely well. The Hawk is a super aircraft and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say something about the arming of that aircraft and progress on airfield defence.

When one reaches forces of gravity up to 5G the pressures are very great, as I discovered. The way in which those young men perform their role with all that they have to learn in tactics and manoeuvrability and control of the aircraft with such additional pressure upon them is a remarkable tribute to the calibre of the young men now coming into the RAF.

I return briefly to a theme already raised in the debate—the use of helicopters. I make no apology for raising the matter again, although I do not believe in corroboration of the type that persuaded the white queen in "Alice in Wonderland." Nevertheless, the matter has been raised by a number of hon. Members and was discussed in depth by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin).

For about eight years I served in airborne forces under constant threat of being made redundant by the advent of the helicopter as a battlefield weapon for transporting troops rapidly from one place to another. One can now say with some justification that the demise of the importance of airborne forces largely coincided with the increased battlefield use of helicopters. My present job is to go on board NATO ships as a naval gunfire liaison officer, so most of my helicopter flying is now done with the Royal Navy. I shall say something later about the difference in attitude between the services in this respect.

It is important that we now conduct a serious investigation into the way in which helicopters are to be used by our forces and whether we have the right command structure for them. I noted with great interest what my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said in the conclusion of the Army debate on 30 January. It was put to the Minister that one needed to overcome the problem of the split command between the RAF and the Army in the use of helicopters. He said:

"If we are talking about central Germany, we are talking about an air-land battle where there are problems between the services anyway in terms of command and control."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 1183.]

My hon. Friend is absolutely right, but surely that cannot be used as a reason for continuing to have problems between the services concerning command and control. This problem can be remedied by following the practice of every NATO country with the exception of three. Those NATO countries have decided to have all battlefield helicopters, whether for the transport of troops, anti-tank or attack under Army control. The exceptions to this practice are Canada and Norway which have all their helicopters under the command of the air force and this country which has a unique structure within NATO with the RAF responsible for helicopters which transport troops and the Army responsible for reconnaisance, anti-tank or attack helicopters. This present policy needs to be reconsidered.

I know from experience of serving in divisional headquarters of the British Army of the Rhine that there are sometimes difficulties in co-ordinating services simply because of different coloured berets within a unified divisional headquarters.

I do not wish anyone to think that my remarks about the attitude of the RAF to flying helicopters are in any way derogatory. However, often an unfavourable comparison is drawn between the RAF's attitude to flying helicopters especially in foul weather or in risky combat conditions with the attitude of the Royal Navy. Indeed the Royal Navy has stickers plastered everywhere which state: "Fly Navy". The Navy will tell hoary tales of how it is prepared to fly in all weathers when the RAF is grounded for one reason or another. That is healthy inter-service rivalry, but I question whether we should have such inter-service rivalry on the battlefield. Surely we would have enough on our hands fighting the enemy without having rivalry within our own forces.

Anyone who has seen the way in which Royal Navy helicopter pilots can take a whole commando brigade ashore in the space of two hours with supporting weapons including artillery—I had the privilege of seeing this when I served with commando forces on HMS Bulwark—cannot fail to be impressed with the attitude of the Navy pilots and the way in which they fly those helicopters. That attitude is desperately needed in western Europe. I am not suggesting that we should import Royal Navy helicopter pilots to fight our battles there, but it is

the type of attitude that one wants to see in the helicopter pilots who will be responsible for attack and transport on the battlefield.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned RAF crews flying in appalling weather conditions. I hope he remembers the signal achievements of the air crews at RAF Boulmer who go out on rescue missions not only over the sea but over mountainous land areas, often in the most atrocious weather conditions. They need a high level of skill to do so.

Mr. Best: The hon. Gentleman need not persuade me. There is 22 Search and Rescue squadron stationed at RAF Valley. It is responsible for saving a large number of lives every year. In addition, its helicopters go out whatever the weather to save lives and rescue people from the mountains of Snowdonia. I speak of them with the highest respect, as I do the mountain rescue teams who often accompany them.

It is always difficult to raise matters without in some way being accused of trying to be derogatory of one service. I am not seeking to do that. I speak in the most laudatory terms of the way those RAF pilots operate.

In the Army debate my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Sir P. Goodhart) raised the question of the division of command of helicopters on the battlefield. I shall not reiterate the points he made but effectively he was saying that there should be a unified command. But he went further and said that he would be prepared

"to support some transfer of funds from our tank improvement programme and our armoured personnel carrier replacement programme to make room for some extra helicopter procurement."

I remind my hon. Friend the Minister of State what he said in that debate as it is important to emphasise it. He said:

"Recent exercise experience . . . and the greater emphasis on mobility as a result of the revised concept of operations for NORTHAG had led to a fundamental review of the requirements for helicopters which supports the land battle. Such a review needed to take account also of the wider requirements for support helicopters in out-of-area and amphibious roles. A new helicopter fleet is an expensive investment. We must plan on the basis of the best judgments that we can make. It has been made clear to the House before that the staff requirement has been put in abeyance and is being reconsidered."—[*Official Report*, 30 January 1986; Vol. 90, c. 1155-83.]

I welcome that statement by my hon. Friend the Minister because I believe it is a realistic approach to the role of helicopters on the battlefield. I endorse every word. I hope that the staff requirement which has been put in abeyance is being reconsidered in a thoughtful way. Very often in these debates quite understandably hon. Members raise constituency points and discuss the flavour of the month, whether that be Westland or EH101. Sometimes we lose track of the long-term view of what the requirements will be, bearing in mind the way that technology has changed the face of warfare and the battlefield in general.

I believe we are now in the process of a revolution in the use of helicopters as fundamental as the advent of the tank or any other major advance in modern technology which has transformed the battlefield. If I am right, we should give the maximum possible consideration to the way in which we can best equip ourselves with those helicopters that are necessary both in the anti-tank role and especially in the mobility role—the transport of troops quickly from place to place. We have seen helicopters in the attack role in Vietnam and in Afghanistan. We have seen helicopters in the anti-tank role in the near east in Lebanon and in the Arab-Israeli conflicts. In the Falklands we witnessed the need of their transport role.

We know that the current concept of mobility in the northern helicopter area group now requires that we should be able to move our troops as rapidly as possible. The case has been made out time and time again. To deal with the massed tank attacks such as we are likely to face in western Europe and to transport our troops rapidly from place to place there is an abiding role for the helicopter on the battlefield. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Ministry will take on board these matters and that we shall have a thorough review so that we ensure that our priorities for the 1990s and the turn of the century are correct.

8.58 pm

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) who has a great knowledge of helicopters and other Air Force matters. He will not draw me into an argument on the relative skills of the RAF and Fleet Air Arm except to say that the Fleet Air Arm appears to have the better public relations officer.

The annual debate on the RAF is usually an opportunity for the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) and me to indulge in some war-time nostalgia, and he has not let me down today with his stories of his days flying Mosquitoes. It is appropriate that this week is the 50th anniversary of the first flight of the Spitfire, and it is right that we should recall the great deeds that it achieved during the war.

My hon. Friend the Minister spoke, rightly, and at length about the efficiency and morale of the RAF which is of prime importance to us. Indeed, it is every bit as important as discussions about aircraft and technical equipment. If morale is not right, we shall get nowhere. It is good to know that the unrivalled airmanship of the RAF is as good as ever, and that it can achieve wonderful results, as shown on the Falklands air bridge, in the bombing competition in the United States, which was a remarkable achievement and deserved greater publicity than it got, in the famine relief operations in Africa, and in the exceptional work done in air, sea and mountain rescue by our helicopter squadrons.

All hon. Members who have been involved in flying realise that it requires a great deal of practice to achieve that standard of efficiency. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will assure me that there are now no restrictions on flying hours in an effort to save fuel. Our front line pilots were getting insufficient hours per month to maintain the standards that they wished.

Talk of the Spitfire leads me to the main theme of my speech which is the Royal Auxiliary Air Force reserves. The RAux.AF played an important part in winning the Battle of Britain. The skills of the pilots and ground crew then showed that a highly trained and professional cadre of reservists was effective in wartime. Certainly the RAux.AF proved its mettle during the war, and, subsequently, in peacetime. It was sad that the squadrons were disbanded in the 1950s, except for the maritime headquarters units. I am glad that the RAux.AF has returned for aerodrome defence and aircraft handling under the present Government.

[Sir Hector Monro]

A year ago the possibility of an RAux.AF flying squadron in the form of a helicopter squadron was mentioned, and I hope that it may come to fruition in the foreseeable future. I also hope that the foreseeable future is getting nearer. I find it hard to bear that the Territorial Army and Fleet Air Arm reserves have helicopters while the RAF, which is mainly responsible for flying, has none. It is time that that was corrected, and we created a helicopter squadron as soon as possible.

I am glad that there is now a chance for volunteer reservists to have an opportunity to fly with squadrons. That seems to be a step in the right direction. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) said, other countries, especially the United States, train reservists to a higher standard than we do, and the civil air guard and naval reservists carry out valuable work. I do not see why we do not provide greater opportunities for our reservists.

I am glad that the RAux.AF regiment squadron, in which I am particularly involved, is working so well, and providing first-class aerodrome defence. The recruitment is good, which shows that there is scope for additional squadrons. They are extremely good value for money in terms of the duties that they are required to fulfil. They want leadership, and they are getting it. I am glad that an increasing number of auxiliary COs are commanding those squadrons. They want good food and pay, and I believe that they receive it.

I have with me a copy of the interesting House of Lords debate on 5 February. In that debate, the noble Lord Thurso spoke about the Territorial Army and, equivalently, the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. He raised the issue of deductions for benefit from Territorial Army or auxiliary airmen's earnings if members of those forces were unemployed. I do not want to go into that tonight, but it is important because at the end of the day the Government did not produce an answer, except to say that there would be more consultations.

It is wrong that if an auxiliary or Territorial Army soldier is out on service for his country he should have his benefit docked because he is receiving income from the services. We have to look at this urgently again because we have been talking about it now for a couple of years. It is the sort of pinprick decision that could be resolved quickly by the stroke of a pen by the two Secretaries of State at the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health and Social Security. I hope that my hon. Friend will reassure me that these consultations are serious and that they will soon be concluded. The matter is a little sore that has been allowed to fester for far too long.

We want to see good equipment, because it is most important to keep up the enthusiasm of all reservists. Part of that comes from having good equipment with which to train. That means good, modern radio sets and Land Rovers, which are essential to the role those branches of the services play. Reservists also need rifles and plenty of ammunition to fire off on the ranges, because that is exciting and good training. Has my hon. Friend given any further consideration to whether the auxiliary squadrons will soon be able to use the Rapier? The auxiliaries have concluded successful trials with the regular Rapier squadrons and it seemed to be satisfactory. I remind my hon. Friend that it is essential for the squadrons to have an opportunity to go to camps that have good facilities and provide good training. Those camps should offer a good change of scenery, because a visit to such camps often takes the place of a soldier's one and only holiday during the year.

Mr. Wilkinson: On a parliamentary visit to Belize I was thrilled and delighted to see some auxiliary personnel working with their regular Royal Air Force Regiment counterparts. They were training in a highly interesting and educative environment. Perhaps the Ministry of Defence could try to make sure that auxiliaries train abroad whenever possible.

Sir Hector Monro: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. When I was in Belize a regular squadron from Lossiemouth was there and there was no training opportunity for any of the auxiliaries. However, the point by my hon. Friend is well made. Every few years—and I cannot expect better than that—a squadron should have the chance to go abroad, whether it is to Germany, or to Gibraltar, or to Cyprus, so that its members can get some overseas experience. In return for what I am asking of my hon. Friend, he is receiving from the Royal Air Force the service of first-class squadrons that are part of the line of battle.

I should like to put a tiny thought in the mind of my hon. Friend. I am interested in the new airfield damage repair units, but I have a word of warning. It is that, by bringing them into same area as auxiliary squadrons, we are using the same catchment area for roughly the same quality of men and women. That may make the achievement of establishment of the two units rather more difficult. We receive a great deal of help from the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Association for all the auxiliary squadrons. One of the Cinderellas of the Royal Air Force is the Air Training Corps and we ought to give it all the publicity, facilities, equipment and exciting opportunities at camp that we can.

The boys join the Air Training Corps because they want to fly and that opportunity must be given to them at least once a year, whether it be through glider courses or on ordinary visits to Royal Air Force stations. After all, those lads are enthusiastic enough to join the Air Training Corps because of their love of flying and from them come some of the fine young men that we heard about earlier who go to university and Cranwell.

I have been interested in the developments on the Nimrod today and the Government have probably taken the right step. After all, we have a fine aircraft in the Nimrod. It is a pity that the early warning aircraft should be scrapped when the radar and not the airframe was causing trouble. Surely in the technical age in which we pride ourselves on living in the United Kingdom we could get the radar right to put into an aircraft of first-class capabilities that have been operating so effectively all round our coast for a long time.

We have talked about the aging Shackletons and that is only too true, but they are maintained in first-class order and their crews have a great love for them, although they look forward to the day when they will transfer to the Nimrod. We should put every conceivable effort into putting the Nimrod right and not think of cancelling it because of the failure of the radar.

The Tucano has been mentioned. I shall be disappointed if it does not turn out to be the aircraft that we were promised a year or so ago. I was undoubtedly in

favour of the PC9 and I was disappointed when it lost the competition. But, having accepted the Tucano, we must see it through at the right price, providing the right performance for the Royal Air Force. The sooner it goes through its paces the better.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was right to mention the problems that face gliding in Britain. I have had a great deal of assistance from my noble Friend Lord Trefgarne in another place and I hope that my hon. Friend will bear in mind that there is an important place for gliding in Britain. It should not be unfairly restricted because operational aircraft are in the same area. There must always be room for a compromise and I hope that that will be achieved at Upper Heyford, an area that is popular for gliding in Britain.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and the Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement will accept that many detailed questions have been forthcoming from the debate. It has been highlighted by the large numbers of hon. Members who have a genuine interest in the Royal Air Force. We are here to talk about it, not to criticise it, but to show our interest in it, to wish it well and to ensure that it retains its exceptionally high standard which all of us would agree is probably the highest in the world.

9.13 pm

Mr. McNamara: This has been a wide-ranging and interesting debate, as is usual on such occasions. If the dramatis personae are the same, we can usually expect the same themes to emerge. The themes this year were similar to those of last year—Nimrod, the EFA and Tornado, with a sub plot made up of the Tucano, Westland and SDI. *[Interruption.]* Some of my hon. Friends seem to think that the speeches today were the same as last year and the year before. I speak not for myself but for my party. However, some of the points were still as relevant and important as those that were made last time.

Let me begin by referring to the gliding controversy at Upper Heyford. Lord Trefgarne sent me a letter about the matter today, and I shall not weary the House with the details. But in what he said there seemed to be an area for compromise and understanding, so that those who are interested in the sport could take the discussion a stage further. That is to be welcomed. There may indeed be a need for some sort of restrictions. It may be that the US air force is in the wrong place. Therefore, this must be dealt with at some time or another. However, from what has been said today, and from what Lord Trefgarne has said, it now seems that the first rash drawing of an enormous area on a map has now been somewhat restricted, and there appears to be room for compromise.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) made a moving speech when he gave us an account of the campaign over section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act. He made a very powerful case indeed. We must cast our minds back to the passage of that Act, and realise what a revolutionary reform it was at the time. For the first time the Crown became liable for torts and other matters in respect of which it had previously been able to excuse itself on the ground of royal prerogative.

NHS hospitals were also placed in the same position, as were Government Departments that were exempt from planning restrictions. These were all necessary compromises that were made at the time, simply because we were entering new territory and developing a fundamental reform. We have now reached the stage where the whole matter must be carefully re-examined. The Opposition tried to raise the matter in relation to Army, Royal Air Force and Navy discipline when we debated the Armed Forces Bill, and we hoped to raise it in the Select Committee. Unfortunately, the advice of the Clerk was that, although it involved discipline, it did not come under the specific Acts that we were seeking to amend and, therefore, it could not be raised.

The hon. Member for Newbury paid a fine tribute to my right hon Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley). However, the time that the Department has spent discussing this matter should be coming to an end, and it should be coming before the House with proposals, given that the subject is causing grave concern. The examples that have been cited today, and those that we have received in correspondence, also point to the fact that there is grave cause for concern.

The hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) spoke of Westland, and the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) filled in the bits that his hon. Friend omitted. The most interesting part of the speech of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn was the fact that, he had been at the controls of the Hawk trainer. The Opposition did not know whether to welcome that or to shudder at it, because while we might welcome a by-election in that constituency, we would not be certain about whether that should be at the expense of a Hawk trainer — *[Interruption.]* I have just assassinated the hon. Member for Ynys Môn in his absence and I trust that he will forgive me.

As for Tucano, I take the point that, now the RAF has got it, we must make the best of it. But we must realise that there are formidable problems to be overcome. We believe that it was the wrong decision, and that is generally accepted on nearly all sides of the House, except the Treasury Bench. The decision has been made, but we want to see proper examination of the faults, if only to show the RAF that we have an interest in the safety of our pilots when they are being trained. I should have thought that that was pretty fundamental.

My hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) raised several important matters concerning the strategic defence initiative. It is relevant and important to our industry and technologies. These are matters on which the Government are extremely vulnerable when refusing to answer legitimate questions. If we were on the other side of the Atlantic, such questions would be freely asked and answered before select committees of either House. It is quite surprising that, in about a year, when the Congressional hearings are published, we shall probably be able to get the answers to all of these questions. That has happened in the past regarding commitments about nuclear weaponry.

The Government have a great deal to gain by being frank with the House about what they agree with foreign countries and about the content of agreements and contracts. If the greatest capitalist country in the world — the United States — is not afraid of releasing its commercial secrets and saying how much it is paying and the circumstances in which it pays for its defence materials and weapons systems, I see no reason why we should be so secretive.

Nimrod has excited the House today. It was generally accepted that the Secretary of State has been prepared to grasp the nettle and come to conclusions. I hope that we

[Mr. McNamara]

have had an educative effect on elements of the press and other hon. Members who have not been present today about the importance to our industrial base and to the future of our defence and civil industries of this range of technology. What the Minister said about the agreement reached by the Secretary of State and the company contains the seeds of progress for a decision that will benefit the House, the firm, the country and the RAF. I wonder who are the people in the RAF who are going around saying that they do not, and never did, want Nimrod.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) gave us some of the history in which he played such a notable part and drew attention to the extent to which the technology has changed. It has been advanced and developed by the Nimrod system. Much of what we now take for granted was on the drawing board when my hon. Friend first made the decision and counselled our going ahead with the project. Much of the project had not been finalised by the air staff in its search for the required performance.

There has been general agreement about how we shall proceed with the European fighter aircraft. Because we now have various Tornado contracts, the time for fixing, arranging and ensuring that the EFA is flying should not be allowed to slip. That is of fundamental importance to the firm and to the project. Slippage means money, and it is an extremely expensive project, even when spread among the four principal countries and others with an input.

Because there is competition in the avionics industry here, it is sometimes felt that the industry does not get the support afforded to our foreign competitors. The United States has the present state-of-the-art and it is feared that, if it were to come in on the EFA's avionics, it would be a grave blow to our industry. The Secretary of State must take that into consideration when he advances his criteria for examining defence contracts.

On the matter of Tornado, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) seemed to think that I was carping in my criticism. I am delighted that the Saudis have purchased four Tornados and the PC9. I am glad that we are selling the Tornado to Oman. I hope that we can find other ways of selling it. But that matter is of no concern to me. I like to see our technology being appreciated throughout the world, but the point that we are making is that the decision of the Saudis could not have come at a better time to get the Government off the hook with their tremendous problems in financing their budget. Selling Tornado off the shelf to the Saudis meant that the money did not have to come from the Treasury to the company. Eventually, it will, but that has been postponed to a certain extent. The purchase came in a way that saved the Government's embarrassment about the problems they were facing then and are still facing. It met the lull at Warton by achieving a continuous supply of work there until EFA comes on stream. If that had not been the case, the Government and British Aerospace should have been establishing a new line for Tornado and taking more people on, but they did not do so because they realised that the hole had been plugged.

Mr. Robert Atkins: The hon. Gentleman is being less than fair about the enormous amount of work done by the Government, the company and Panavia to ensure that the contract, which was budgeted for by Panavia, came to fruition. It was expected and was part of the line that is now continuing. It is less than fair to say that embarrassment was saved by the contract when it was anticipated.

Mr. McNamara: The degree of anticipation was tempered by who would be granted the communications contract — Ptarmigan or the French. We were helped along by the United States Government as compensation for not getting the battlefield communications contract. The hon. Gentleman must be careful. I do not deny the effort of the company and the Government to get the contract. One would assume that any Government would operate in the same way.

I wish to discuss the comments of the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), but not his general thesis that we should reintroduce conscription, which we do not accept. However, we should have strong reserves and we should encourage those who want to join the reserves to do so. I have sympathy with the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) about the problems associated with members of the reserves who find themselves on social security and supplementary benefit.

In his speech the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood drew attention to the consequences of the Government's policy and to what the Secretary of State said in answers to questions. The Secretary of State said that he was considering our commitments in terms not of cancellation, but of the financial consequences of current strategy. He said that a defence review would not be carried out, although consideration of financial consequences appears to me to be a defence review anyway. He outlined our commitments: Trident, NATO, the Brussels treaty, the east Atlantic and the Channel, air defence of the United Kingdom and central front, out-of-area commitments and the counter-terrorist activities in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood believes that because of those commitments we need conscription. I am unsure as to how one can maintain those commitments with the present scale of the Secretary of State's dilemma. They are all strong commitments. They are all fundamental to the Government's strategy.

Although we should examine carefully our out-of-area commitments, there is no question but that the Opposition would support our commitment to NATO, air defence and our need to defeat terrorism in Northern Ireland. But the Government cannot have our support on Trident. The Government cannot cover those seven major commitments on their present budget, and it will decrease in coming years. It is impossible for them to maintain the most sophisticated and expensive weapons systems.

No amount of small savings — of the Secretary of State introducing his new criteria for contracts, or introducing some of the business methods of the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) — will alter the Government's dilemma. They cannot maintain the services that they need—they cannot maintain the RAF that they need—while they maintain the commitment to Trident. One need only consider the expense of some RAF equipment, including the Tornado and the EFA, to know that the budget will not sustain all those demands.

We must get rid of Trident and the independent nuclear deterrent, not for any doctrinaire reason, but because we believe in the safety of Britain and in maintaining a proper

conventional defence. If we do not, the weapon of last resort will become the weapon of first resort because we cannot afford to buy the weapons of first resort.

9.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. John Lee): As is inevitable, the debate has focused on individual issues and aspects of the Royal Air Force programme. However, it is important not to lose sight of the total contribution which the Royal Air Force makes to the defence of the nation. I agree with what the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) said about the lack of interest displayed by so many hon. Members in our separate service debates. I do not wish to be excessively partisan about the point, but, with some honourable exceptions, the attendance of Opposition Members in such separate service debates is not substantial. Nor is it from the alliance, although the speech of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) was much appreciated and put across in quieter form than the more Ramboesque performance that we normally get from the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown).

Mr. McNamara: The Minister must mean "Chopper".

Mr. Lee: One cannot say that from the Dispatch Box, can one, Mr. Speaker?

It would also be appreciated if defence correspondents took more interest in our separate service debates.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State described the major equipment programmes that are coming to fruition. It would be useful for me to describe how the capabilities which the equipment represents are deployed. In the United Kingdom, our air defence forces of Phantom and Lightning aircraft will be progressively replaced by the air defence marks of Tornado—the F2 and F3—during the next few years. When the process is complete, we shall have seven operational F2 and F3 squadrons and two Phantom squadrons. In parallel with that substantial improvement in our fighter force, we have in progress a major programme of improvements to the chain of radars and command facilities known as the United Kingdom air defence ground equipment. I am happy to draw this to the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins), but I must emphasise that the programme is a rolling one and will continue for the rest of the decade and beyond. It is on target.

May I also deal with the point raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and Ynys Môn (Mr. Best) about Hawk. I am happy to confirm that the conversion of Hawk to an air defence role is complete. I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) that there are no restrictions on flying hours.

Our strike, ground attack and reconnaissance forces in the United Kingdom include three operational squadrons of the Tornado GR1 strike attack aircraft, and squadrons of Jaguars, Harriers and, in the maritime role, Buccaneer. The training units of all those aircraft are based in the United Kingdom. Most have wartime roles.

Our extensive Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft are based at Kinloss, Lossiemouth and St. Mawgan and the operational forces in the United Kingdom also include our tanker and transport forces—TriStar, VC10s, Victors and Hercules—as well as the Chinook, Sea King, Puma and Wessex helicopters in the support and rescue roles.

Our strike attack force in RAF Germany now includes six Tornado GR1 squadrons. In Germany, the Tornado has replaced the Buccaneer and, more recently, the Jaguar. The Jaguar, however, will remain in the reconnaissance role in RAF Germany until it is replaced in due course by the Tornado reconnaissance aircraft.

In the ground attack role, there are two squadrons of Harriers with their unique capability for off-base deployments. That capability will be substantially enhanced when the new Harrier GR5 aircraft enters service later in the decade. I shall refer to that later. Our forces in Germany also include Phantom fighters and Chinook and Puma support helicopters.

In other parts of the world, RAF deployments include detachments of Phantoms in the Falklands, Harriers and helicopters in Belize, and other units in Ascension Island, Cyprus, Gibraltar and Hong Kong.

All told, that is an impressive list of deployments. Even so, it omits important elements of the RAF's capability, for example, the RAF Regiment and commmunications units. I hope that I have said enough, however, to convince the House that, despite the problems it faces, which we have discussed this evening, the RAF remains an effective fighting force with a remarkable range of capabilities and a professionalism to which my hon. Friend the Minister paid tribute in his opening speech.

Mr. Dalyell: I asked four specific questions about Fylingdales. Will the Minister say whether the control is to be by America or the United Kingdom? Who will be responsible for the vetting at Fylingdales from now on?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman asked some detailed questions. I was coming to his contribution a little later. I was coming to the subject of Fylingdales and the detailed points that he mentioned about the strategic defence initiative. I undertake carefully to consider what he said and return to him with a detailed reply. I acknowledge receipt of his letter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about the points he made in the Navy debate.

I should like to pay tribute to the interesting speech made by hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) about conscription. It has been commented upon by a number of hon. Members. We all heard what he said about conscription, but I must make it clear that the Government have no plans to introduce conscription.

The hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and for Eccles, (Mr. Carter-Jones) and my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) referred to the EFA project. It represents a major milestone in European defence industrial collaboration bringing tangible economic and military benefits. It should serve as an example for the collaborative procurement of equipment required for the armed forces of NATO member countries and continue the pattern of much greater standardisation and interoperability within the Alliance set by the Tornado programme.

There is a strong political will in Europe that EFA should succeed. We shall continue to play our full part in the process of striving for a cost-effective collaborative programme based on fair and equitable terms for all partners.

For the development phase it has been agreed that the United Kingdom will receive 33 per cent. of the work. For production, work shares will be based on the number of

[Mr. Lee]

aircraft committed by each nation. To answer the point mentioned by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North, the project management will be Munich based.

British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce are in the lead for the United Kingdom but the equipment companies would be involved to a great extent in a programme of such a scale and complexity as EFA.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Does my hon. Friend recognise that it is the view of the British aerospace industry that there is a need for an urgent meeting between the Defence Ministers of the participating countries to try to resolve some of the relatively small but none the less important difficulties in the development of the project?

Mr. Lee: That would make sense, and I shall bring the point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. Wilkinson: Could not the European fighter aircraft be another project for Panavia to manage—of course in this case plus Spain — so that we could develop a family of military aircraft in the way that the airbus consortium is successfully developing a family of civil aircraft?

Mr. Lee: That is one option. As for the French withdrawal from EFA, the United Kingdom and her partners tried very hard indeed to match their differing requirements in one aircraft design. It was a great pity when France decided that its requirement for a smaller, lighter aircraft made it impossible for it to join in the preparation for the project definition phase. The United Kingdom is, however, paying close attention to President Mitterrand's suggestion that reciprocal collaboration between EFA and the French national project—Rafale—be sought. The French Government and the EFA partners are currently discussing the possibilities.

The experimental aircraft programme will demonstrate the integration of technologies needed for any new, sophisticated combat aircraft; the lessons learned from it will have application to many aspects of modern combat aircraft such as EFA. Work is proceeding on schedule, as originally planned, towards the first flight at the end of May 1986.

I confirm once again that it is the intention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to go to Warton to see the roll-out of the experimental aircraft programme and to view the other fine facilities there. If we were unaware of them, we should be continuously reminded of them by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble. Many hon. Members are looking forward to the first flight of the EAP, which we hope will take place at Farnborough in September 1986.

Almost every hon. Member has referred to the Nimrod AEW, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell). I noted that my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) came into the Chamber to listen to that part of the debate because of his substantial constituency interest in the Nimrod programme. However, Nimrod was mentioned by virtually every speaker.

As for the details of the arrangements that have been made with GEC Avionics, there is nothing that I can usefully add to the full account that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement gave the House when he opened the debate.

As for the other options that we shall be examining, whether from home or from other suppliers, we shall be making available a cardinal points specification request for tender documents to any United States or European company, or consortium of companies, that is interested in bidding. We shall also be consulting the NATO military authorities. I should explain to the hon. Member for Linlithgow that the reason for doing this is that the Nimrod AEW is our contribution, however theoretical at present, to the NATO AEW force. Our interest, in overseas terms, will obviously centre on the Boeing AWACS, the Grumann Hawkeye and the Lockheed Orion.

Some hon. Members are unhappy about the fact that the Government are contemplating American alternatives to the Nimrod AEW programme. They must not prejudge the decision that the Government will be taking later in the year. We shall have fully in mind the kind of considerations to which hon. Members have drawn attention. However, they must remember that we are talking about providing for vital national and NATO defence interests. We do not yet know whether the proposals to be put to us by GEC Avionics within the next six months will meet the needs of the Royal Air Force to an acceptable cost and time scale. It would be wrong if in the meantime we were not examining other means of securing, from either British or foreign suppliers, those vital interests.

Other hon. Members raised various issues connected with the history of the Nimrod project. I have said before in the House that this is a history of which neither we nor the industry can be proud. Today, however, I want to look forward rather than backwards. GEC Avionics has shown its commitment to, and its confidence in, its ability to complete the project satisfactorily. The Government are very anxious that GEC and its employees should have every chance to demonstrate that in the coming months.

Tornado was mentioned by a substantial number of hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Minister of State said that all nine Tornado GR1 squadrons in the strike attack role have now been formed. Deployment will be completed later this year. A further two squadrons equipped for the reconnaissance role will be formed over the next few years. In the air defence role, a total of seven squadrons will eventually be formed. Instructor training at the operational conversion unit at Coningsby has commenced. Eight Tornado GR1 squadrons will be based in Germany and three in the United Kingdom. All seven squadrons of the air defence variant will be based in the United Kingdom.

The Tornado GR1 is capable of the highest levels of performance in the counter-air, interdiction, offensive air support and reconnaissance roles. The aircraft can exceed 800 knots at sea level and twice the speed of sound at high level. Depending on mission, the GR1 can operate at ranges of up to 750 miles, although this can be extended by air-to-air refuelling. The GR1 is capable of operating at night and in all weathers with its ability to penetrate enemy air defence at low levels and at high speed combined with its highly accurate bombing potential, making it a major improvement in the RAF's offensive capability. Its extensive fit of armaments includes 27 mm cannons, Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, bombs and the JP233 cratering and area denial weapon. They will all be

introduced. The Skyshadow electronic counter-measures pod enhances self-protection and it is also planned to fit air-launched, anti-radiation missiles — ALARM — for defence suppression in 1987.

Since the Tornado GR1 first entered service in RAF operational conversion units, seven aircraft have been lost, with, sadly, the loss of four lives. But I would ask the House to look at this record in its proper perspective. Accident rates for new aircraft during the early stages of their operational life tend to be higher than those which have been in service for some time. There is nothing unusual in the accident rate for the Tornado, which is similar to aircraft such as the Buccaneer and Jaguar at the same stage in their introduction into operational service.

We are procuring 165 Tornado ADV, including three prototypes, to equip seven front-line squadrons. The aircraft will initially carry four Skyflash medium-range air-to-air missiles and two Sidewinder short-range air-to-air missiles. It is now being modified to carry four Sidewinders. We plan to replace those missiles with advanced weapons in due course, and we are studying the feasibility of increasing the weapon load at the same time.

I can assure the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North that all aircraft in operational squadrons will be fitted with Foxhunter when they are operational. *[Interruption.]* The clapping behind reminds me that my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble asked about the attrition buy of Tornados. As he rightly said, we are negotiating for the purchase of nine additional GR1 aircraft. The House will be aware that we lose a certain number of aircraft on peacetime operations. Nine additional aircraft will help to offset those losses and maintain the strength of the Tornado GR1 force. The requirement for further aircraft will be considered as necessary and in the light of the resources available.

I now want to deal with our helicopter requirements. The Minister of State and I took particularly into account the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Mr. Wiggin) on the wider ranging use of helicopters. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) also talked about that, as did the hon. Member for Eccles, the hon. Member for Linlithgow, and my hon. Friends the Members for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) and for Ynys Môn. We were extremely interested in the feelings of the House about the wider role and increasing importance of helicopters.

In all the discussions surrounding the future of Westland, it is all too easy to lose sight of the military helicopter programmes with which we are concerned. I propose therefore to describe those programmes briefly, and the nature of the service requirements to which they relate.

In European collaboration, there are three major military helicopter programmes in which the United Kingdom is involved. The Anglo-Italian EH101 programme is now well into its full development stage, and the helicopter will enter service with the Royal Navy in the early 1990s. We expect to place the first production orders in about three years' time. Secondly, we have been negotiating on the light attack helicopter for some time with Italy and the Netherlands for the development of the existing A129 helicopter. A feasibility study is planned to begin this year.

In parallel, the French and Germans have had their own collaborative programme for an attack helicopter, the PAH2. We remain willing to discuss the possibility of establishing a single combined European attack helicopter programme if the other nations are willing. The third collaborative programme is the NH90 — a tactical transport and anti-submarine helicopter—for the mid to late 1990s. The United Kingdom is participating with France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands in feasibility studies which we expect will be complete this year. None of the participating nations is yet committed to development or policy for future airmobile operations before firmly established requirements can be produced for future support helicopters.

I now turn to the military requirements to which those helicopters relate. There are firmly established Navy and Army requirements for EH101 and the light attack helicopter respectively. The position on the requirement for future support helicopters is, however, rather more complicated. The original staff target for a replacement for the Wessex and Puma, AST404, was placed in abeyance last year when the Army decided, in the light of experience in a number of trials and exercises, including Exercise Lionheart, that it needed to review its requirements for helicopter support. That review has been in progress for some time, and it has become apparent that the defence staff needs to reconsider its whole approach on light support helicopters and on the larger medium support helicopter, for which the procurement options would include EH101 or an additional purchase of Chinook helicopters.

This is a major task, and it is unlikely that we shall be in a position to announce decisions on the way forward until the early part of next year. In the meantime, it is not possible to say what form any future requirement might take, or whether it will prove to be of sufficient priority to find a place in our forward programme. It is already clear, however, that one of the major issues for consideration is the size of helicopter required. The defence staff will be considering possible requirements for the smaller light support helicopter, for which the NH90 and helicopters such as Black Hawk would be possible contenders.

These actual and potential new helicopter programmes and the support of existing types in service provide a clear sign that my Department will be a major customer of the United Kingdom helicopter industry for as far into the future as we can foresee. Support of our current helicopter, for example, is worth about £60 million per year. That business will of course continue. In addition, orders for Sea King and Lynx to the value of £40 million were placed last year. The Ministry of Defence and Westland have worked closely and successfully together for many years now, and I am sure that the close working relationship will continue.

Mr. Carter-Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify a point? If somebody produces an air staff target, is it not assumed that it is the considered opinion of the air staff that that is what it wants and requires? If a company then produces a model to fit that requirement, is it not reasonable for it to expect that it will get the orders?

Mr. Lee: The hon. Gentleman is partly right. However, it was a target, not a requirement. I can only repeat that the services needed to reconsider their requirement after the experience of exercises, particularly Lionheart.

Mr. Best: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the only review necessary is a review of how much more is needed, because that is the only feasible way in which it can move? Secondly, is he telling the House that these matters have not been fully canvassed and there have not been reviews, discussions and submissions made as to the requirements? Are we really starting de novo?

Mr. Lee: I can understand the unhappiness of the House, but we are talking about an evolving threat and the wider role that my hon. Friend and many hon. Members were asking from us. That is the dilemma that the staffs are examining.

It is also worth mentioning that, throughout Westland's period of difficulties, the Government have continued to do everything possible to promote the sale of Westland products overseas. I was discussing a possible sale in Malaysia last week, and I was involved in discussions in Zimbabwe last year.

From the point of view of the services, as indeed of the country as a whole, our concern must now be to wish Westland well in its reconstruction. Westland remains the only British helicopter development and manufacturing company, and the principal supplier of helicopters to our Armed Forces. As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made absolutely clear, we shall be doing all that we can to ensure that Westland's position and capabilities continue to be recognised fully in the international market place.

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Member will recall that I spoke earlier about Westland and the six undisclosed shareholders. Can he now answer the question put in the Select Committee on Defence this morning? If the six undisclosed shareholders are revealed to be friends of Sikorsky, and were acting in collaboration with it, does Sikorsky then have to make a takeover bid?

Mr. Lee: With the greatest respect, that is a matter for the stock exchange, and detailed interpretation and examination of company law. My understanding is that the beneficial ownership that lies behind those six nominees has not been established.

Mr. Wallace: A number of hon. Members in this debate, and indeed in the debate on the Army, raised the question of helicopters and the divided service operation of helicopters. Can the Minister say whether his Department has considered that and whether it intends to review the position with a view to one service operating helicopters?

Mr. Lee: The whole area of the future requirements for helicopters is being examined at present; the hon. Gentleman's point is being taken into account.

The question of the trainer was raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North and for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) and by the hon. Members for Kingston upon Hull, North and for Eccles. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn for telling the House that he would not refer to Firecracker this evening. I hope that he will not take us through his points in favour of fluoride.

The decisive factor in our choice of the Tucano over the BAe PC9 was cost. Both aircraft were judged capable of meeting the RAF's requirements very satisfactorily, and both held out prospects of creating similar numbers of jobs in the United Kingdom. The offer from Shorts was cheaper by a clear margin than the BAe tender, and the Pratt and Whitney PT6A-62 engine was judged to be more expensive to operate than the Garrett engine which is to power the Tucano.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Cannock and Burntwood said, the Tucano has completed six hours of test flying, involving a full evaluation of the basic flying and handling characteristics. The test pilots are delighted with the aircraft's performance. I hope to visit Brazil at the end of April and to visit Embraer to see the progress that is being made.

The delay in the programme is primarily due to Shorts experiencing difficulties in recruiting experienced staff and the company has only recently resolved an industrial dispute. We are satisfied that the delay does not imply any technical problems in the programme. The slippage will not lead to any additional costs to the Ministry of Defence. The delay is in fact to be for a few months duration. It will certainly not be anything like two years which, with the greatest respect, was a gross exaggeration by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North.

It was a pleasure to hear the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson). I will inevitably deal with a number of his points later. However, in terms of the name, I must say that I am sorry to disappoint him—he does not deserve this after the speech that he made—but we intend that the trainer should be called the Tucano trainer.

In answer to a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North, I have been to see the Trago Mills trainer in action and it is very impressive. The Buccaneer has been eagerly awaited by certain hon. Members. In the maritime strike attack role, the Buccaneer's capability for low-level attack on enemy ships is being improved by the introduction into service later this year of the Sea Eagle anti-surface ship missile. The Buccaneer can also be armed with laser-guided bombs.

Buccaneers will be maintained in the maritime strike attack role well into the next decade. It is planned to run-on two squadrons of Buccaneer aircraft in the maritime strike attack role into the 1990s. The avionics update is currently taking place on no fewer than 42 Buccaneers.

All five of RAF Germany's Jaguar squadrons will be replaced by the more capable and advanced Tornado GR1. The aircraft withdrawn from Germany will be absorbed into the force that we intend to run-on in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North raised the question of identification friend or foe. I am happy to say that the protracted discussions in NATO on the new system have now resulted in agreement on a common standard following the recent agreement in NATO on the standard of future IFF equipment. We are taking steps to implement the next stage of our programme. We expect to be in a position to reach decisions on the way forward shortly.

The RAF Regiment was mentioned by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Duffy) and my hon. Friends the Members for Tayside, North and for Dumfries. The likelihood of an attack on our airfields in wartime is high and a wide variety of measures have been taken to ensure survivability and the continuance of air operations. These include the hardening of aircraft and personnel shelters and the base installations. Furthermore,

a Royal Engineers squadron is provided for each RAF Germany airfield for rapid runway repair and the maintenance of essential services.

RAF Germany's four airfields are defended from air attack by Rapier surface-to-air missiles supported by Blindfire radar, and ground defence is provided by the 300 officers and 2,500 men of the RAF Regiment.

The regiment's main roles are ground defence and low-level air defence of RAF installations. Most bases have a small regiment staff to train their RAF personnel in the basic skills of ground defence. The more demanding defence tasks are carried out by six regular light armoured squadrons and six auxiliary field squadrons. The low-level air defence tasks are carried out by six regular Rapier-equipped squadrons and by one auxiliary squadron equipped with the Skyguard system captured during the Falklands campaign. There are plans to increase the auxiliary force to 21 squadrons over the next decade.

The regiment also provides three Rapier squadrons in the United Kingdom for the United States air force. This programme is funded by the United States. Current regiment detachments include a Rapier squadron in the Falklands, half a Rapier squadron in Belize and a light armoured squadron in Northern Ireland.

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland)

10 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): I beg to move,

That the draft Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 14th November, be approved.

The order consolidates the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 and the subsequent provisions amending that order. The principal amending provisions are contained in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Orders of 1976, 1978, 1980 and 1984.

The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, which became law in August 1972, established five area education and library boards. Among other things, the boards provide primary and secondary schools, special schools for handicapped pupils requiring special educational treatment and institutions of further education. They make contributions towards the cost of maintaining voluntary schools, provide transport for pupils and enforce school attendance. In addition, they regulate the employment of children and young persons, and secure the provision of recreational and youth service facilities. Boards are also required to develop a comprehensive and efficient library service for persons living, working or undertaking courses of education in their areas.

The five boards are representative of locally elected district councillors, transferors of the school and maintained school authorities, teachers and other persons appointed by reason of their interest in or knowledge of the services for which the boards are responsible.

The 1972 order has been extensively amended by the other orders to which I referred and as a consequence has become difficult to read. This consolidation order brings the 1972 order and all the amendments together in one enactment.

A commitment to consolidate these orders was given in May 1984 by the then Secretary of State in his response to the Speaker of the Assembly about the Assembly's report on the proposal for a draft Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1983. Recommendation No. 22 of that report called for a commitment to publish a consolidation order early in 1986. We believe that the time is now right to introduce this consolidation measure as the whole of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1984 is now in operation. Its final provisions—relating to children with special educational needs—were brought into operation on 1 January this year.

The Standing Orders of both Houses of Parliament enable Northern Ireland Consolidation orders to be referred automatically to the Joint Committee on Consolidation Bills. The Joint Committee considered the draft order on 4 December 1985 and is of the opinion that it is a purely consolidation measure. It makes no changes of substance in the existing law but brings it together in one order. Accordingly, I commend the order to the House.

10.4 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): Within my short speech I should like to congratulate the hon. Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) on his promotion to the Government Front Bench. I enjoy the success of other

[Mr. Stuart Bell]

people and I enjoy the success of other hon. Members. It is with genuine pleasure that I make my remarks. The next general election is, fortunately, a long way from our thoughts tonight. I do hope that the Minister will not find himself on permanent night shift in this House on Northern Ireland business, notwithstanding talks on a higher altitude than those between us.

The order before the House is a consolidation measure, the family tree of which goes back to the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1972. The 1972 order was part consolidation and part new matter, that is, the establishment of education and library boards in place of the system that had existed until that date. The 1972 order was followed by a number of amending orders, to which the Minister has referred, concluding with the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1984. The Minister also mentioned the orders of 1976 and 1978.

The 1984 order made a number of miscellaneous amendments including amendments expressly designed to anticipate the consolidation now sought to be made. The whole of the 1984 order is now in operation, except for certain articles which came into force on 1 January of this year, pursuant to the commencement order.

As I understand it, on 1 January this year the whole of the 1984 order and the whole of the order preceding it, which goes back to 1972, is now in operation. The Minister referred briefly to special education needs. He also referred to the five boards of locally elected district councillors and to primary and secondary schools. The Opposition has a great deal to say about education in Northern Ireland but, given the rigid confines of this debate, this is not the time to embark upon them.

As a courtesy to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to the House, I therefore do not tarry. We shall not divide the House — not with the serried ranks behind me. I therefore commend the order to the House.

Dr. Mawhinney: With the leave of the House I should like to thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind and generous comments of a personal nature.

Question put and agreed.

Resolved,

That the draft Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, which was laid before this House on 14th November, be approved.

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That the Standing Order of 16th December 1983 relating to the nomination of the Select Committee on Members' Interests be amended, by leaving out Mr. Paddy Ashdown and Mr. Gregor MacKenzie and inserting Mr. Jim Craigen and Mr. Michael Meadowcroft.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

SELECT COMMITTEES

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): Motions 4 to 11 inclusive are on behalf of the Committee of Selection. With the agreement of the House, I shall put them together.

Ordered,

WELSH AFFAIRS

That Dr. John Marek and Mr. Peter Hubbard-Miles be discharged from the Welsh Affairs Committee and Mr. Allan Rogers, Mr. Geraint Howells and Mr. Ian Grist be added.

EMPLOYMENT

That Mr. Gordon Brown and Mr. Gerrard Neale be discharged from the Employment Committee and Mr. Frank Cook and Mr. Eric Forth be added.

ENERGY

That Mr. Kevin Barron be discharged from the Energy Committee and Mr. William O'Brien be added.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

That Mr. Norman St. John-Stevas be discharged from the Foreign Affairs Committee and Mr. David Howell be added.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

That Sir John Stradling Thomas be added to the Trade and Industry Committee.

TREASURY AND CIVIL SERVICE

That Mr. Roger Freeman be discharged from the Treasury and Civil Service Committee and Mr. John Watts be added.

HOME AFFAIRS

That Mr. Robin Corbett be discharged from the Home Affairs Committee and Mr. David Clelland be added.

ENVIRONMENT

That Mr. Andrew MacKay be discharged from the Environment Committee and Mr. Richard Holt be added.—*[Sir Michael Shaw on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Employment (Nuneaton)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Neubert.]*

10.7 pm

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss the unemployment level in my constituency which could be worsened by the proposed closure of an iron foundry at Sterling Metals, with the potential loss of 700 jobs. I am grateful for the fact that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment is here to reply. This is my first opportunity to speak with him on the Front Bench.

The proposed closure of the iron foundry with the subsequent loss of 700 jobs raises several issues. I shall deal with the origins of the closure and the effects it will have in my area. The impact of the redundancies must be taken in the context of the travel to work area of Coventry and Hinckley and not just in my constituency. I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) is in the Chamber, and I know that, if his office did not prevent him, he would share my concern and support me in the debate.

The unemployment rate is 15·7 per cent., and male unemployment is about 50 per cent. higher than female unemployment. That is similar to the west midlands average of 15 to 16 per cent. All 700 redundancies would not be in my constituency, but they would have a significant impact on an already high unemployment rate. Recently the general position has to some extent improved. In my constituency we had a 12 per cent. improvement between December 1984 and December 1985 which amounts to about 600 jobs. They will be virtually wiped out by the closure, if it occurs.

The foundry industry has obvious peculiarities. It is an old industry and mainly male dominated. Therefore, most of the redundancies would be among male workers with a skill which is not easily translated to other industries. Certainly, the retraining facilities available would help people to find new jobs, but as there will be so many of them, their needs must be considered specifically.

As the foundry industry has declined, those people cannot expect to find jobs within the industry either locally or further afield. That puts them in a special position. The magnitude of the disaster locally would be more than one might initially imagine. There are only a few companies of that size in the immediate area, and the company would be reduced to 400 people.

The foundry industry faces fierce competition from abroad. A few months ago we expected an investment of £5 million in the foundry which would have been welcome and given it a future. The bombshell out of the blue was to find that, instead of that substantial investment, we were to face closure. It has been put down to the fierce competition from abroad, including so-called subsidised competition from Spain, Brazil and elsewhere. My hon. Friend the Minister has agreed to investigate the matter again. It is not a new problem because it was raised with the Government in May 1983 by the Association of Major Casting Manufacturers, but no action appeared to come from that.

The company makes the decision on its commercial viability. The foundry lost £500,000 last year, and because of price difficulties it is not thought to be viable in future. That is extremely worrying. It bears out the association's point that many automotive foundries have been closed, but continuing contraction will result, not in the rationalisation of duplicated facilities, but in the elimination of specialised plants. The plant is largely concerned with the tractor industry. It is the last independent casting unit for selling blocks in the United Kingdom. There will inevitably be a transfer of more work abroad, which will raise our imports. The penetration of imports is considerable.

In answer to a parliamentary question recently my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade gave me figures which showed that between 1978 and 1984 the imports from Spain increased 5·5 times, and from West Germany 2·5 times. There are now imports from Brazil and that means another competitor.

The foundry faces fierce competition, but it is a high quality foundry and its customers are prepared to continue taking supplies from the company, admittedly at the correct price—a price that they think they can afford. As a consequence, we are not talking about a lack of work, skill or facilities. Although investment is needed we are dealing with the viability of the foundry.

I ask my hon. Friend to pass on to his colleagues and Ministers in the Department of Trade and Industry the hope that they will make every effort, and perhaps a special effort, to help the company to consider possible restructuring of the facilities. That could save, if not all, at least a lot of the jobs. It is also reported that there is a possibility of interest in a takeover for the foundry, and I ask the Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry to give serious and careful consideration to the possibility of help by way of advice and financial support to anyone who keep the foundry open.

A considerable amount of restructuring may be necessary and that may involve help over an interim period to restructure and try to make the foundry viable again. I am not asking for unlimited and indefinite resources for the industry, because it is largely for commercial interests to take a decision, but help from Government sources could avert the closure and give an opportunity for the foundry to be reorganised or restructured financially. That would save some of those jobs and leave a viable iron foundry in the area. It is a worthwhile cause because our foundry industry has gradually been eroded by foreign competition, and more and more of our foundry work goes overseas. The jobs lost are never replaced, although the work is still needed.

My request is for any possible help that the Government can give, especially from the Department of Trade and Industry, to save the foundry or at least to provide an opportunity to discuss the possibility of saving the jobs of the people at the foundry. If that does not happen, 700 jobs will go and in many cases it will be difficult for people to transfer to other work. That will put a serious load on the budgets for unemployment and possibly on the budgets for social security as well. That must be balanced against the money which could be used to support the foundry for a short time.

It is necessary in this case for the Department of Employment to consider giving some special attention to the needs of people affected by this sort of redundancy. The people who may be made redundant have good skills and are retrainable, but many of them have been in that type of manual industry for many years and there are few comparable industries in my area, in neighbouring areas or elsewhere in the west midlands. The benefits we have

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had in recent years have come from small companies setting up and taking advantage of Government schemes and local help. We have had some considerable success, but those are largely small companies who employ a few people and only gradually get bigger. The substantial effect of such numbers as these wipes out that advantage.

People need advice on what is available to them by way of retraining and new careers. It will be helpful if my hon. Friend can say that some special help will be available. Certainly my local department could not cope easily with that number of people coming to it so quickly.

We have an iron foundry which produces for the tractor industry. It is successful in the quality of its production and the satisfaction that it gives to customers. It has competed successfully in the market, particularly in West Germany, and so it must have some future, either by takeover or in some other way, perhaps restructured and losing some jobs.

I hope that my right hon. and learned Friends at the Department of Trade and Industry will do everything that they possibly can to explore the possibilities that exist and to give the foundry any support that they can. If the foundry cannot be saved I ask that every effort will be made to give the best help and advice to those who would suffer from redundancy.

10.21 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): My hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Stevens) has described in great detail the problems which his constituency faces and how they will be exacerbated if Sterling Metals, one of Nuneaton's major employers, closes its iron foundry. I fully accept the seriousness of Nuneaton's unemployment problem and I sympathise with my hon. Friend's genuine concern. I have listened carefully to the points that he has made and I shall try to answer as many of them as possible. I, too, welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. Maude) in view of the close interest that he also has been taking in this matter.

My hon. Friends' concern about Sterling Metals is entirely understandable. The Sterling Metals iron foundry employs 700 of their constituents and near neighbours and is the only independent United Kingdom foundry producing cylinder blocks for high-speed diesel engines. I understand that Birmid Qualcast has re-appraised its operations and has decided that the market outlook does not justify the investment needed to enable the foundry to survive and meet the requirements of new diesel engine designs.

Demand for castings has fallen sharply over recent years and the diesel engine sector has been particularly hard hit. The downturn in demand for castings reflects the general downturn in the principal customers, especially automobiles and construction, and is being felt by other component producers such as the drop forging companies. I understand that Birmid Qualcast expects demand for the Sterling foundry's cylinder blocks to fall by 5,000 tonnes to 30,000 tonnes a year by the end of 1986.

My hon. Friend the Member for Nunneaton mentioned competition from Spain and Brazil. I do not dispute that imports from countries such as Spain and Brazil have had a detrimental effect on Sterling Metals, but they are not solely to blame. My hon. Friend will doubtless be aware that we cannot prevent the Brazilian Government from subsidising their foundry industry as they wish. However, foundries, like any other industrial sector, have recourse to the anti-dumping procedures, where imports from non-EC countries are concerned. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry can provide guidance on how complaints might be made to the Commission. My hon. Friend might like to raise that with him.

As far as Spain is concerned, it is now an EC member state and from 1 January 1986 became subject to new disciplines regarding state aids to industry. The state aids provisions of the Treaty of Rome give the Commission powers to investigate and, if appropriate, require the withdrawal of state aids which distort competition in intra-Community trade.

Spain has now altered her turnover tax system to remove the element of export subsidy. If there are other forms of subsidy involved the industry will need to present some evidence of them in order to give the Commission grounds to investigate. We have pressed the Commission to ensure that Spain complies with the state aid rules from the outset. If the United Kingdom foundry industry produces evidence of state aids being granted since 1 January 1986, we shall consider pursuing the question with the Commission. The loss of 700 jobs at Sterling Metals is very regrettable, but I have to say that that decision is a matter for the commercial judgment of the company based on its view of the market outlook.

As I think my hon. Friend knows from his recent meeting with my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry, we made an offer of £600,000 assistance under the Industrial Development Act towards the modernisation of the foundry. However, Birmid Qualcast decided not to proceed with the investment.

Further discussions could be held if a way could be found of maintaining the operation—for example, by way of a buy-out. Again, this is, of course, a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry, but I understand that it would be willing to consider providing assistance for a buy-out providing a commercially viable plan were put forward.

If the management and/or the work force at Sterling Metals are considering a buy-out, I would urge them to consult the West Midlands regional office of DTI—which would be willing to help and advise—at the earliest opportunity.

I realise that in the event of redundancy, some of the work force may have difficulty in finding new jobs, and I can assure them through my hon. Friend that all the facilities of the Manpower Services Commission will be available to help them in their search for work or retraining. When I refer to work, I include self-employment.

But apart from the immediate effects on the work force, I acknowledge that the closure will represent a further reduction of job opportunities in Nuneaton, and I know the area already has high unemployment. I was in the West Midlands myself earlier this week. The problem of unemployment is one of the most serious facing not only this country, but the whole industrialised world. Unemployment in Britain has been rising for 20 years and the west midlands—our industrial heartland—has been especially hard hit by the recent recession and by market shifts.

The historical reasons are well known. Our industries were overmanned, our work force was undertrained. We were slow to adapt to market changes and to new production methods. We became steadily less competitive, with the result that firms throughout the country which could not sell their goods had to close down or shed jobs. We have had to undergo a change from the old industrial pattern to new technologies and advanced manufacturing.

In the case of Nuneaton, the traditional manufacturing industries of textiles and metal bashing have declined, and the town has had to adapt to a more service-orientated economy. Nuneaton enjoys a good location at the centre of the Midlands motorway network, and its position has aready been exploited by several distribution companies. The M42 link road which has recently opened on the outskirts of Nuneaton could generate further interest.

I am not suggesting that my hon. Friend is overstating Nuneaton's problems. It is not easy to adjust to major changes in market conditions. However, we must not constantly look on the black side. Companies in Nuneaton are winning contracts and new jobs are being created there.

The Galliford group, a local construction company, won contracts worth £35 million throughout the country during the latter half of 1985. Sainsburys intends to replace its existing supermarket with a superstore next year. Creating 200 new jobs, and ASDA is also planning a superstore in Nuneaton which could bring over 300 jobs.

Despite the difficult times. People are finding work: 3,000 people have been placed in jobs through Nuneaton jobcentre alone since April last year, and many more will have found jobs by other means. Unemployment in my hon. Friend's constituency fell between January 1985 and January 1986. These are welcome and encouraging signs which go some way to offset the bad news.

Clearly, much more needs to be done, and the Government have a role in encouraging positive change. One of the ways in which we can help is by providing incentives to attract investment to areas with severe economic problems. Nuneaton is part of the Coventry travel-to-work area which received assisted area status in November 1984. Since then, companies moving into Nuneaton or expanding their existing operations have received offers of over £1 million in regional aid. This money has helped to create some 200 new jobs and safeguard 500 existing ones.

This is a sizeable amount of Government assistance, which is focused directly on job creation. The review of regional policy in 1984 led to a new system of regional aid focused on job creation rather than encouraging capital-intensive investment, and some service sector activities became eligible for regional aid for the first time. We cannot create the jobs that are needed in Nuneaton. But through regional aid we can, and do, help those areas worst affected by unemployment to attract the investment that does.

I mentioned self-employment earlier. I hope that my hon. Friend will agree that it is important that we do all that we can to encourage people to think beyond "who will employ me?" We set up the enterprise allowance scheme to help unemployed people who wished to start their own businesses by providing a weekly allowance in the difficult initial period. The scheme has been expanded by 15,000 places nationally this year, and the qualifying period of unemployment is to be reduced from 13 to eight weeks.

As a result of the expansion, the MSC will be able to provide support to nearly 1,000 people in Coventry and Warwickshire in 1985-86—8 per cent. more than last year. Some 70 people are currently receiving the allowance in Nuneaton, and ample funds are available to meet demand. One small engineering company in Nuneaton, which my hon. Friend might know, which began with help from the scheme now employs 17 people and has a £500,000 turnover. The Manpower Services Commission would welcome increased participation in the scheme throughout Coventry and Warwickshire.

We are deeply conscious of the potential of the small firms sector in creating employment opportunities, and we have done a great deal to encourage the growth of small firms by reducing the burden of form filling and simplifying planning procedures. We announced further measures to help small firms last November, including £2·5 million next year in support of local enterprise agencies. We run small firms centres, which provide the advice of experienced businessmen to potential and established small firms, and the centres have close links with local enterprise agencies and small business clubs.

I understand that Warwickshire county council is building starter units at the Hammond business centre in Nuneaton, and that some private sector firms are also building and refurbishing units for small businesses. These, and the presence of the Warwickshire enterprise agency, are encouraging signs of new initiatives in the local economy with significant job creation potential.

Enthusiasm and effort are essential if enterprise is to succeed, but advice and training are also vital. My hon. Friend was right to emphasise that. The Manpower Services Commission is funding a wide range of courses designed to meet the needs of small businesses through the training for enterprise programme.

The adult training strategy, on which we are spending £260 million this year, is intended to make training more widespread, more flexible, and more relevant to labour market needs. We are living in a time of change—indeed, another industrial revolution—and people at all levels need access to training and retraining. We are helping more than 3,000 people in Coventry and Warwickshire through our locally delivered training programmes this year, compared with under 2,000 last year.

Training is particularly important for young people. They, and the long-term unemployed, have been hard hit by the recession. Young people straight from school or college have no proven work skills or experience to help them find jobs and it is this problem which YTS—one of our most successful measures—addresses. The £835 million that we are spending on YTS this year represents a massive investment in young people's future.

The extension of YTS to two years from April is a major step towards ensuring that all young people under 18 are either in jobs, in full-time education, or receiving high-quality training. In other words, unemployment need not be an option for them. There is a good deal of enthusiasm for the two-year scheme, in Nuneaton and throughout the west midlands, and the MSC does not envisage any major difficulties in providing enough places.

Another of my Department's priorities is helping the long-term unemployed. The unemployment rate in the Coventry travel-to-work area is too high—although, as my hon. Friend knows, it is lower than the average for the

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west midlands region, and it will take time for it to come down. Steps need to be taken now to deal with the worrying problem of long-term unemployment, however.

The community programme, our major scheme to help the long-term unemployed, has been expanded by 100,000 places nationally this year, and the MSC is providing 3,400 places in Coventry and Warwickshire this year—over 1,000 more than last year. The Nuneaton and Bedworth borough council and North Warwickshire Projects (1985) Ltd. are only two of the managing agents providing quality places in Nuneaton and the surrounding area. My hon. Friend will recall that projects funded by the community programme benefit local communities as well as the people employed on them.

Nuneaton, like many communities in the midlands and elsewhere, is indeed facing problems arising from the decline of its traditional industries. The Government have shown their concern in many practical ways, and I have talked briefly about regional aid and our employment and training measures. This all represents a significant commitment to the regeneration of this part of the country.

Adapting to change is never easy but, with the Government's support, the efforts of the people of Nuneaton are beginning to pay off. We have done a great deal to help Nuneaton, and we shall continue to do all that we can.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 27 February 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

COUNTY OF SOUTH GLAMORGAN (TAFF CROSSING) BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 6 March.

LONDON DOCKLANDS RAILWAY (CITY EXTENSION) BILL *By Order)*
Order for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 6 March at Seven o'clock.

ABERYSTWYTH HARBOUR BILL *(By Order)*

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 6 March.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed upon Thursday 6 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

1. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in the Province.

2. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement concerning the present security situation in the Province.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): Since I last answered questions in the House on 30 January, I regret to say that two members of the security forces and four civilians have died in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province. Although they continue to bear the brunt of terrorist attacks, the security forces carry out their duties with great courage and dedication. As a result of their efforts during 1985, a total of 522 people were charged with serious offences, including 24 with murder. So far this year 28 people have been charged with serious offences, and 36 weapons, 2,254 rounds of ammunition, and 1,159lb of explosives have been recovered.

Sir John Farr: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. I share his admiration for the work of the security forces in the Province. However, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the security forces are fully prepared for the strike on Monday? Are they prepared to cope with any eventuality? Does my right hon. Friend think that the time has come at least to place the Anglo-Irish agreement in cold storage until such time as——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question concerns security.

Sir John Farr: —a round table conference takes place?

Mr. King: I very much regret any suggestion that there should be a strike on Monday. I know that the Royal Ulster Constabulary will be anxious to take every step that is necessary for the protection of law and order and of all law-abiding citizens who wish to go about their business. That is a matter for it, and it recognises that very clearly. My hon. Friend raised the subject of law and order. I very much regret that the security forces should be distracted from their important work of fighting terrorism by having to cope with the problems that Monday may bring.

Mr. Proctor: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that in the year or months before the Anglo-Irish settlement was reached the number of soldiers in Northern Ireland was reduced, and that since the Anglo-Irish settlement the number of soldiers in Northern Ireland has increased? Will he speculate on how many more soldiers will need to be committed to Northern Ireland as a result of the Anglo-Irish settlement?

Mr. King: The analogy that my hon. Friend seeks to draw is completely false. The reason for the increase in the force numbers is the increase in terrorism, which bears out clearly the statement that I have repeated at this Box that the agreement threatens only the terrorists. They recognise it, and they are determined to take extra measures in every

way they can to seek to defeat it. They have launched a series of particularly nasty attacks, leading to the destruction of police stations. We have made it absolutely clear that we shall take the necessary measures for their restoration. That has taken extra forces. I hope that every hon. Member will be determined to stand with us and ensure that if those forces are required for the protection of law abiding citizens and for the defeat of terrorism, they will be provided.

Mr. Fatchett: When the Secretary of State next meets leaders of the Unionist parties to discuss security, will he make it clear that the security forces are not helped by the industrial action threatened by the Ulster community? Will he also make the point that when the Unionists refer to themselves as Loyalists, the security forces will have difficulty in understanding, when the Unionist community or their politicians seem to be encouraging every possible effort to defy the constitution and the wishes of Parliament? How can they be constitutionalists when they are prepared to take that type of action?

Mr. King: Those who call, as I do, for all in Northern Ireland to support the security forces recognise the most unsatisfactory paradox of people who demand support for the security forces and then put an additional strain on them. I seriously hope that those who have chosen to embark on that policy will, even at this later hour, think again, because it will be in the interests of nobody in the Province.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the Secretary of State tell the House what the Government are doing to monitor the growth of Loyalist paramilitary groups? Should he not include that in his general report on security? Will he comment on the fifth arson attack on a Catholic school in Ballymena and say whether the Government are taking action to provide better security than they have in the past?

Mr. King: The information that I have just given about recoveries of arms and prosecutions is not confined to one section of the community, but refers to terrorism from whichever section of the community it may come. I am confident about the determination of the RUC and the security forces to oppose terrorism, from whichever sector it may come.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that security in Northern Ireland has serious implications for the west coast of Scotland, that arms caches have been discovered on several occasions, that the paramilitaries train there and that any upsurge in Protestant-related hostility could have serious repercussions in Scotland?

Mr. King: I am aware of my hon. Friend's point and I understand his concern. I know that he will join me and the Government to ensure that we stand against terrorism and paramilitary activity from whichever quarter it comes.

Mr. Archer: Will the Secretary of State get a message to members of the Workers Committee 1986 to the effect that while we on the Opposition benches are actively on their side in the quest to retain jobs, we would like to believe that they are equally on our side for the same purpose? Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind the essential distinction that while lawful demonstrations are by definition a matter for the individual, any attempt to coerce or intimidate people to take part will be dealt with quickly and decisively?

Mr. King: Law and order are matters for the police, but I know that there is a clear determination to ensure that law and order are properly observed. Every step that needs to be taken will be taken to try to protect the citizen and to try to defeat the curse of intimidation. I echo the words of the right hon. and learned Gentleman in respect of the dispute. The only certain outcome is that it will be damaging to jobs in a Province, which desperately needs more jobs.

Secondary Education

3. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he has any plans to seek to change the form of secondary education in the Province; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): There are no plans to change the form of secondary education in Northern Ireland, but I am always willing to consider on their merits any formal proposals for reorganisation which may be submitted in the best interests of local schools and their pupils.

Mr. Pawsey: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his first reply from the Dispatch Box. I hope that it will be the first of many.

Will my hon. Friend give details of examination results in the Province, especially those at O and A-level, and how they compare with the rest of the United Kingdom? What part does selective education play within the framwork of those results?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. In 1983-84, the last year for which I have figures, the percentage of all school leavers with one or more A-levels was 22·5 per cent. in Northern Ireland and 17·2 per cent. in England and Wales. The percentage of all school leavers with five or more O-levels or grade one CSEs was 8·7 per cent. in Northern Ireland and 10·7 per cent. in England and Wales.

Mr. Archer: May I seize the opportunity from the Opposition Benches to welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Dispatch Box and to wish him well.

Has he had time to become aware of the fact that the heads of schools in the area of the Belfast Education and Library Board have heard from the chief executive that, to reduce the amount spent on paying school cleaners, they must reduce the floor area they are using and lock up some of their classrooms? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the board has voted to suspend those measures for two weeks? Does he appreciate that the anguish is not about the form of the education service, but about its existence?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his kind personal remarks.

I am aware from the media that this discussion is taking place within the Belfast board. The board has not yet finalised how it should use the resources which have been made available to it. I have had no formal proposals yet from the board.

Terrorism

4. **Mr. Gow** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what response he has received from the Government of the Republic of Ireland following the

representations which he has made about Ireland acceding to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott: The Irish Minister for Justice signed the European convention on the suppression of terrorism in Strasbourg on 24 February.

Mr. Gow: What valid reason is known to my hon. Friend for the failure of the Irish Government to accede years ago to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism? What further steps are required to be taken by the Irish Government before the accession becomes operative in the Republic? When does my hon. Friend expect the accession to take effect?

Mr. Scott: It is for the Irish Government to say why they did not sign the convention earlier. The Taoiseach has said that he hopes that the necessary legislation will be on the statute book by the end of this year. I think that it is relevant to point out that the United Kingdom took 18 months between signing and acceding to the convention.

Mr. Benyon: Does my hon. Friend accept that many of us feel that this is a most satisfactory development of the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. Scott: I am sure that the only people who can suffer from this step by the Irish Government are the men of violence in Ireland.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

5. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on progress made to date at the Anglo-Irish conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last reported to the House there has been a meeting on legal affairs within the framework of the conference. At the same meeting I discussed security co-operation with Mr. Noonan, the then Minister of Justice. A joint statement was issued after the meeting giving an account of our work. I have placed it in the Library. The meeting was useful and constructive, and I am encouraged by the commitment of both sides to make rapid progress to ensure that cross-border security co-operation is as close and effective as possible.

Mr. Ross: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that reply. I acknowledge and welcome the step taken on the security front. I should like to express our continued support for the agreement. I trust that the Government will maintain their firm resolve in these matters. Have we got round to talking within the conference on the subject of the administration of justice, which is covered, I think, by section 7?

Mr. King: I expect that further discussions on that aspect will take place shortly. I appreciate the administrative support that we have. I think that we are starting to make progress. Whatever the reasons for not signing the European convention, many Unionists did not believe in that item when it was included in the communiqué. They thought that the document either would not be signed or, if signed, not for a considerable period. The fact that the Irish Government and the Taoiseach made that announcement when they did is encouraging.

Sir Adam Butler: Are not the Unionists' reactions to the talks at Downing street—they seemed to give some measure of encouragement but have now been translated into even firmer intransigence—likely to alienate the rest of the British people, who give time, energy and a great deal of money to try to help the Province?

Mr. King: I am well known as a strong supporter of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom. I fully support the commitment of the whole of the United Kingdom to the defeat of terrorism and the achievement of a more stable, prosperous and happy society in Northern Ireland. The present developments are extremely worrying in the sense that they stir up the sort of comments that my hon. Friend has made. I am anxious to cement the relationship, and at the moment I am worried that some Unionists are working precisely in the opposite direction to their professed ambition.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the agreement is no part of the law of the United Kingdom?

Mr. King: I think that that point is clearly understood. It is an agreement which confers benefits on both communities in Northern Ireland. It is an agreement also to work together with the Government of the Republic for the benefit of the people in the north of Ireland and the people in the whole of Ireland. I confirm the right hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there will be no progress with the conference without the consent of the majority? Coercion will not be the way to achieve that consent. In those terms, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that he and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will pursue the concept of round table talks, because out of those talks could come a new framework for Northern Ireland, which may or may not include the Anglo-Irish at least treaty as it is currently constituted, but may at least, show the way ahead?

Mr. King: I very much agree with the point that my hon. Friend made when opening his question. I think he would agree that coercion can have no part in this, and that is precisely the spirit of seeking a sensible way forward that has motivated my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and me, and has motivated us in the discussions that we had. I suppose it is that that adds the peculiar sense of disappointment that we have at the subsequent events. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) remarked afterwards at the press conference:

"We have got away from deadlock".

That is precisely what we had hoped, and we are very sorry that second thoughts seem to prevail at the moment.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: With the dangerous events that are proceeding in the Province, does the Secretary of State not agree that while it is absolutely true that there is no way in which the North could be put into the South against its wishes, it is equally true that the union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland could be broken by the Unionists? There is a grave danger that this is what might happen in the months ahead.

Mr. King: I obviously respect very much the right hon. Gentleman's great experience and knowledge of this subject. I fear that the threat to the Union could come from those who most claim to espouse it, and at the moment

some of them appear to be embarking on a course which is "in direct collision with this "sovereign imperial Parliament".—as they would describe it—of the United Kingdom. It is a serious matter.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who support the Union and support him in his job are very disappointed to see the absence from this home of democracy of all the Unionist leaders, except the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell)?

Mr. King: I know the strength of feeling over this matter in Northern Ireland, and I respect that. All of us who are democrats know that it is in this Chamber that those matters should be discussed and argued. A policy of abstention, an unwillingness even to enter into debate and argument, is not a policy of strength—it is a policy of weakness and a policy of disaster.

6. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what indications he has as to the impact of the Anglo-Irish agreement on the security situation in Northern Ireland; and will he make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Our discussions at the Intergovernmental Conference have already set in train a programme of work between the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana. It will, inevitably, take time for the full benefits of this work to show, but I am optimistic that this will enable us progressively to deal more effectively with terrorism. The signature this week by the Government of the Republic of the European convention on the suppression of terrorism also bodes well for future security co-operation.

Mr. Flannery: Is not the virtual abdication of any political responsibility by the two main Unionist leaders bound to create a difficult and delicate security situation on Monday? There is the likelihood that the hard men will take over. May we have an assurance that there will be the widest mobilisation of the security forces to preserve the peace and ensure that those people who want to go to work will get to work without having barricades and thugs all over the place preventing them, as they did on a previous occasion?

Mr. Scott: I deplore the fact that the action on Monday is likely only to divert the resources of the RUC away from its principal task of combating terrorism. It is up to the police to decide how Northern Ireland is policed in the light of the circumstances that are likely to arise on Monday, but I am confident that we can look to them to do their duty.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: The agreement is described in *The Times* today as a constitutional monstrosity. Its consequences are predictable and were predicted from the Conservative Benches, but is it not desirable that nothing should be said, done or not done on Monday that could endanger security or jobs, in particular those at Harland and Wolff?

Mr. Scott: I echo that sentiment, but those who have embarked on that course and who are urging people to take that course will bear the responsibility for whether it puts pressure on the security forces, for whether it puts the life of the elderly or infirm at risk and for any other damage that is done to jobs in Northern Ireland at present or in the future.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the Anglo-Irish agreement's concentration on security undermined by the comment of a Mr. Peter Clark made last night on Border Television during an interview? He is a Downing street adviser and a Conservative candidate in Scotland. He said that one side has to win and he would fancy changing the border by retaking county Donegal—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will the Minister dissociate himself from such irresponsible conduct by a Conservative candidate and Downing street adviser?

Mr. Scott: The Anglo-Irish agreement is designed to bring peace and reconciliation to Northern Ireland. That is the Government's intention. We face opposition from the Unionist community at the moment and we are sensitive to that, but we have every intention of making the agreement work.

Mr. John Mark Taylor: In the context of the professed ambitions of the two main Unionist leaders, has my hon. Friend been able to discern whether they are for integration or devolution?

Mr. Scott: It is not for me to say. My hon. Friend will be as aware as I am that within the Unionist family there are divergent opinions on the constitutional way forward. The Government are convinced that the way forward lies with devolution back to the political parties representing both traditions in Northern Ireland so that day-to-day decisions may be taken by locally elected political leaders.

Youth Training Programmes

7. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many young people have joined the youth training programme in Northern Ireland in 1985-86 compared with the two previous years.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): To date this year 14,936 young people have joined the youth training scheme in Northern Ireland compared with 12,742 in the previous year and 11,575 in 1983-84.

Mr. Yeo: How many of the trainees on the youth training programme are subsequenty placed in jobs?

Dr. Boyson: I can give the information that my hon. Friend desires. This year, 57 per cent. of those aged between 16 and 17 who have done the one-year course have left to go to jobs. That is 2 per cent. more than last year and 6 per cent. more than two years ago. One can say that the scheme is working.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Has the Minister had cases brought to his attention where young unemployed people have been unable to avail themselves of youth training because of their inability to acquire the basic necessary kit.

Dr. Boyson: The answer is no.

Job Placements

8. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many placements have been achieved by Northern Ireland job markets so far in 1985-86 compared with the same period in 1984-85.

Dr. Boyson: By 7 February 1986, job markets in Northern Ireland had placed 27,063 people in employment in the current financial year. This compares with 22,520 during the same period in 1984-85.

Mr. Jones: I take great encouragement from what my hon. Friend has said about the advances over the past 12 months. Is he able to tell the House whether large numbers have moved into self-employment or direct employment, or what trends might be expected?

Dr. Boyson: I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend. There has been a 20 per cent. increase in placements this year. At the same time, there has been a 13 per cent. increase in vacancies notified. There has been an increase of about 7 per cent. in self-employment over the past three years, raising the total of self-employed from 80,000 to 85,000 in the Province.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way forward for the job market in Northern Ireland is for all firms to continue working as normal? Does he agree that it would be a tragedy and a disgrace if jobs and orders were put at risk by political strikes?

Dr. Boyson: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. If we have a series of political strikes, or any successful political strikes, that could put at risk the delivery of goods to foreign markets, all that we shall be doing is creating unemployment, not only for the present generation, but for those who are now children in school.

Security

9. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross border security.

Mr. Tom King: Security co-operation on the ground between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda is already good, but I am confident that as a result of the Anglo-Irish agreement we shall see an enhancement in the co-ordination of security at all levels. At the next meeting of the conference we shall be considering a progress report from the Chief Constable and the Commissioner of the Garda Soichana on the programme of work referred to in article 9(a) of the agreement.

Mr. Dubs: Cross border security appears to have improved since the signing of the agreement, most notably resulting in the two arms finds in the Republic recently. Therefore, is it not surprising that the Unionists, who have been demanding closer co-operation in security matters with the Dublin Government for so many years, appear not to be happy about that aspect of the agreement and are still trying to undermine it?

Mr. King: I have repeated my disappointment too many times from the Dispatch Box. I understand the concern of Unionists about certain aspects of the agreement. They undermine the quality of their opposition by refusing to recognise the merits and benefits that there could be. Any objective observer knows perfectly well that if we are to make an impact on terrorism the problems of the border have to be met. That is not the sole reason for terrorism, but it is one of the resources that the terrorists use and that is where we can get real benefit for every law-abiding person in the Province.

Mr. Hayes: Does my hon. Friend agree that Monday's madness will not do anything to help cross border security? Will he make it clear to those who are seen to be setting themselves up as some form of Afrikaaners of Ulster that he and this House will not be bullied into suspending or scrapping the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. King: It is quite clear that if the action on Monday takes place in the form envisaged it will put a great strain on the resources of the security forces. Obviously, in that respect it may put others at risk, particularly if there were to be problems with terrorism. That must be recognised and understood. I do not approach the problems arising from, and the criticism of, the agreement in an atmosphere of hostility towards the Unionists. The atmosphere at 10 Downing street two days ago was entirely constructive in trying to find a way in which we could seek to meet legitimate concerns in a constructive and profitable way. I regret very much that for the moment those approaches appear to have been totally rebuffed.

Mr. Mallon: Will the Secretary of State confirm that there are Unionists in Northern Ireland who are not in favour of the so-called strike, who are in favour of the Anglo-Irish agreement and who are not prepared to follow in the footsteps of the abominable no-men on Monday? Will the Secretary of State also confirm that there is a sizeable section of the population in the north of Ireland which is not Unionist and is firmly in favour of the proposals contained in the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. King: It is true that there is significant support, certainly in the minority community, for the Anglo-Irish agreement. There are many more, I think an increasing number of responsible Unionists who are now beginning to recognise some of the benefits that can flow, not least from the fact that there is a movement of votes from the party which advocates violence to the constitutional nationalist approach. I continue to emphasise that point, and the hon. Gentleman is in a position to know it better than anybody. That is something of long-lasting benefit to everybody in the Province.

Mr. Bruinvels: Has my right hon. Friend seen a special supplement in *Police Review* dated 31 January called

"The Grim Statistics—A tribute to the RUC",

which gives details of many cases where members of the IRA have crossed the border and killed members of the RUC? Can my right hon. Friend confirm that all border controls will be strengthened, especially in relation to the Monday problem, and will he give them the additional protection that is demanded?

Mr. King: I have not seen that article, but the point arose earlier today about the increase in Army resources, which is precisely to deal with some of the problems of terrorism, not least on the border.

Wages Councils

10. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many workers under 21 years presently work in industries in Northern Ireland covered by wages councils agreements.

Dr. Boyson: It is estimated that some 6,000 workers in the wages council system in Northern Ireland are under the age of 21 years.

Mr. Nellist: Is the Minister aware that in our debates on wages council reform Tory Members and Ministers said

that 8,000 jobs would be created over five years from the abolition of protection for those under the age of 21? Is he aware that that works out at 37 jobs a year for the 17 constituencies in Northern Ireland? Is the Minister and his colleagues, who earn up to £40,000 a year, telling 6,000 young workers who earn £30 or £40 a week that they must take wage cuts of £5 or £10 a week, when 125,000 people are unemployed; to create only 37 jobs a year?

Dr. Boyson: I hope that every hon. Member will welcome any extra jobs in Northern Ireland, in whatever constituency they are created. Obviously there is a difference of opinion between the hon. Gentleman and Conservative Members about wages councils. On 11 February we debated the Wages Bill. We believe that if juvenile wages are too high compared with adult wages there will be juvenile unemployment. Compared with Germany and the rest of Europe, juvenile wages in the United Kingdom are undoubtedly higher, and we have higher juvenile unemployment.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that young people would rather gain work experience at the going rate and get involved in jobs than be unemployed at a theoretical and far too high wage rate?

Dr. Boyson: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Surveys have shown that 80 per cent. of young people want jobs. Obviously if they are trained in those jobs they can, as full journeymen and adults, earn higher wages. If they do not get a job in the first place, they will be on the dole for years to come.

Ms. Clare Short: Is the Minister aware that since 1979 youth wages throughout the United Kingdom have dropped considerably, and youth unemployment has risen massively? Is he further aware that wages in Northern Ireland are lower than in any other part of the United Kingdom? Is he seriously advocating further cuts in the wages of young workers in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: We would all welcome a high-wage economy in Northern Ireland by people working, producing the right goods and selling them throughout the world. If one compares juveniles' wages in the United Kingdom with apprentices' wages in West Germany, one sees that in the United Kingdom they are 50 to 60 per cent. of the adult wage, whereas in Germany they are between 15 and 25 per cent., which means that there is less juvenile unemployment there.

Industrial Disputes

11. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many days were lost in Northern Ireland through industrial disputes in 1985; and how this compares with the figures for Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: The Northern Ireland figure is 80 days per 1,000 employees, compared with 110 for Great Britain, excluding the miners' strike. In recent years, figures for the Republic of Ireland have been consistently higher than those for Northern Ireland, and we estimate that that will also be the case for 1985.

Mrs. Bottomley: Cannot that encouraging news about the Province be communicated to potential investors abroad, rather than the damaging headline-grabbing efforts planned for next Monday?

Dr. Boyson: I welcome my hon. Friend's comment. Indeed, last month I spoke about the Labour Relations Agency, which reports that all foreign employers in Northern Ireland are satisfied with labour relations and productivity. We shall ensure that that information is spread, as my hon. Friend asks, and we hope that nothing will be done on Monday to undermine that image.

Mr. Bell: Noting the Minister's response to industrial relations in Northern Ireland as foreign firms see them, will he confirm that a recent poll in the *Belfast Telegraph* showed that the overwhelming majority of people were against violence and the majority revealed their opposition to a strike? Will the Minister tell the House what the impact of Monday's strike is likely to be on job prospects in Northern Ireland?

Dr. Boyson: There is no doubt that if there is a widespread strike on Monday in Northern Ireland that will have serious industrial repercussions in two ways. First, it will affect investment coming into Northern Ireland which we desperately want. Secondly, buyers in other countries will be doubtful of the security of placing orders and whether the deliveries will be made on time. All workers and employers in Northern Ireland should bear that in mind when they make their decisions on Monday.

Mr. Robert Atkins: Is it not worrying that the threat of Monday's strike could well damage a successful company such as Shorts which has worldwide and United Kingdom commitments that are important to the future of the Province? Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to urge the workers in that great company to continue on what is already a successful path and avoid industrial action on Monday?

Dr. Boyson: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments and I entirely endorse what he said. The best thing that industrial workers can do on Monday — indeed, the best thing that all workers can do on Monday — is to go to work. That will show that they are concerned about the security of their employment, show the rest of the world that work is continuing in that area and that the Province is reliable, both for investment and for purchasing from.

Terrorism

12. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the operations of the Prevention of Terrorism Act in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The Prevention of Terrorism Act continues to play an important part in the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland. Detailed statistics on the operation of the Act in Northern Ireland are given in quarterly bulletins published by the Northern Ireland Office. Copies of these are available in the Library.

Mr. Campbell Savours: May I have a straight answer to a question that I have repeatedly asked for the past three months? Is it illegal, under section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, for insurance companies in London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom to make payments directly or indirectly to the IRA? Is that illegal?

Mr. Scott: The hon. Gentleman has asked me this or associated questions on four occasions. If he has a shred of evidence which shows that any illegal act has taken place, he should send that evidence to the police.

Sir Eldon Griffiths: Is it not also true that a number of people in Northern Ireland and on this side of the water are alive today who would otherwise be dead if it were not for the Prevention of Terrorism Act? Is it not a disgrace that the Opposition should have consistently voted on three-line Whips against that life-preserving measure?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend echoes a point that I have made several times from the Dispatch Box on both the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978. If the Opposition came to office they would find that, within a matter of days, they, like us, would need these powers in the battle against terrorism.

Social Security Bill

13. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if his Department has assessed the impact on single persons, pensioners and low-income families of the provisions relating to Northern Ireland of the Social Security Bill; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Richard Needham): As it is the Government's intention that the long-established and widely accepted principle of parity with Great Britain should remain the basis for provision of social security in Northern Ireland, it follows that the impact of the proposed reform on single persons, pensioners and low-income families will be generally the same in Northern Ireland as in Great Britain.

Mr. Archer: May I help the hon. Gentleman a little further? Has he seen the calculations by Dr. Eileen Evason, which show that single people in Northern Ireland stand to lose an annual total of £8·9 million, pensioners £11·4 million, low-income families £3·3 million and families as a whole £8·8 million? Will he tell his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services that the people of Northern Ireland have suffered enough deprivation?

Mr. Needham: I must tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that I have seen those figures. I pay tribute to Dr. Eileen Evason for the valuable work that she does in the Province. However, her figures are speculative and mainly based on the likely size of the social fund, and that has as yet not been decided.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

14. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when it is proposed to hold a meeting of a sub-group consisting of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Attorney-General and the Minister for Justice and the Attorney-General of the Republic of Ireland as referred to in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: We had a meeting on 13 February with the Attorney-General, at which we discussed extradition, the possible harmonisation of parts of the criminal law, and the search for measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice.

Mr. Bell: I congratulate the Secretary of State on anticipating the question from Her Majesty's Opposition and so promptly calling a meeting of the sub-group. Was not this meeting a mini Intergovernmental Conference, which shows that there is a positive attitude to the Anglo-Irish agreement from both the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic of Ireland? Will he confirm that progress will continue to be made to improve the confidence of the Nationalist community, in the judiciary and in the administration of the justice which is likely to be one of the litmus tests of the Anglo-Irish agreement? Will he further confirm that these matters will be on the agenda of the next meeting of the full Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference?

Mr. King: One of the matters that was discussed at our meeting concerned improving the arrangements for extradition. Anyone who knows anything about the battle against terrorism knows that it is vital to be able to pursue terrorists wherever they may go. That is one of the obvious benefits which I hope will flow from this agreement.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Winnick: Will the Prime Minister reaffirm that the Anglo-Irish agreement stands, regardless of what happens next Monday, and that no amount of violence, intimidation or paramilitary force will change the mind of the large majority of British people who are clearly in favour of the agreement? Is it not the case that if a power-sharing agreement had not been destroyed 12 years ago by the Unionists there would have been no need for such an agreement in the first place?

The Prime Minister: I make it clear that should the strike go ahead on Monday the action will not deflect the Government from their determination to implement the new Anglo-Irish agreement, which has the support of the overwhelming majority of both Houses of Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: When my right hon. Friend reflects upon the largest export order ever obtained by this country, does she also reflect on the vicious personal attacks made upon her when she went to Saudi Arabia and did so much of the work that resulted in that contract?

The Prime Minister: I leave any attacks on me aside —if one puts oneself in the front line in politics, one will get shot at, as we see every Tuesday and Thursday. I congratulate British Aerospace on the excellent order that it has received, and thank Saudi Arabia for the faith that it has placed in our factories, their management and those who work in them.

Dr. Owen: Is the Prime Minister aware that Customs and Excise has today raided around 30 premises, one of which is the headquarters of Johnson Matthey Bankers? Is she further aware that there have been some 12 arrests, that Customs and Excise is investigating as much as £7·25 million in gold bullion which, it appears, may have been smuggled into the country, and that the Bank of England

has confirmed that Johnson Matthey Bankers is co-operating with Customs and Excise? In view of the fact that the Prime Minister on 2 August 1985 refused my request to set up a tribunal of inquiry on the very issue of the unsoundness of—*[Interruption.]* Some £185 million worth of this country's money has been given to Johnson Matthey Bankers. In view of the fact that the Prime Minister refused to conduct a tribunal of inquiry at the Governor of the Bank of England's insistence — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a very long question.

Dr. Owen: It is a very important matter, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. But equally, fair shares all round.

Dr. Owen: Since the Governor of the Bank of England has repeatedly said that the banking and gold bullion business of Johnson Matthey Bankers is sound, will the Prime Minister now set up a tribunal of inquiry?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir. I understand that Customs officers visited a number of premises today, including Johnson Matthey's. They visited those premises this morning in the course of investigating possible VAT irregularities involving gold. Johnson Matthey Bankers issued a press statement. The Customs officers were following the responsibilities laid on them by statute and, of course, such cases are not referred to Ministers.

Dr. Owen *rose*——

Mr. Rost: Will my right hon. Friend comment on the latest lunacy on the part of Derbyshire county council, which has ordered the banning of *The Times* newspaper from public libraries and educational establishments because of the dispute at Wapping? Is that not the latest example——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question must relate to the Prime Minister's responsibilities.

Mr. Rost: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I asked whether the Prime Minister would comment on it.

The Prime Minister: The banning of newspapers is small-minded and smacks of censorship.

Q2. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday, 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruce: Is the Prime Minister aware of the anger in my constituency among the 390 employees of British Airways Helicopters, based in my constituency, about the negotiations to sell the company to Coln Valley Investments? Is she further aware that Mr. Martin Meade is the subject of litigation over an alleged offence under section 330 of the Companies Act 1985, involving £18,000 of expenses? Coln Valley Investments last registered its accounts in 1982, when it made a loss of £40,000. Will the Prime Minister intervene and urge British Airways to break off negotiations with this cowboy operator, which has a record of asset-stripping and job destruction?

The Prime Minister: No, I will not intervene. If the hon. Gentleman feels strongly about the matter, he can take it up with British Airways.

Mr. Rowe: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the deep and deepening anger felt by a great many of us over the fact that in a part of the United Kingdom an agreement designed to improve the security of the whole of the United Kingdom is being undermined by actions, some of which are not even legal?

The Prime Minister: I have indicated our approach to this strike. I hope that it will not take place, but if it does, and if it takes place in the name of Unionism, it will lead to the erosion of support for the Union in the United Kingdom.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Is it not desirable that this House should have the opportunity, for the first time, to debate the principle under which an external court purports to lay down what legislation may or may not be passed or must be passed by this House?

The Prime Minister: I assume that the right hon. Gentleman is referring to the decision of the European Court. That was a limited decision about the age at which women may retire from the public service. The decision was made under a law passed by this House and the consequences flow from it.

Sir Peter Emery: Before 7 o'clock, will my right hon. Friend look again at the Order Paper, on which there is an amendment tabled by the Procedure Committee, which is now supported by 150 hon. Members, right hon. Members, ex-Ministers, ex-Whips and even a senior ex-Chief Whip? Perhaps, as a birthday present to me, my right hon. Friend will follow the recommendations of her advisers that this amendment should be the subject of a free vote—really as a free vote—and will ensure that certain unknown influences—perhaps not so unknown—will not drum Ministers and Parliamentary Private Secretaries into the Lobby to vote against it?

The Prime Minister: I wish my hon. Friend a happy birthday and congratulate him on his assiduous work. I am sure that, at the end of the debate to which he referred, he will hear most excellent advice from my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal.

Q3. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lofthouse: Given the Prime Minister's support for Victorian values and family life, may I ask why she supports the Sunday trading Bill? Will she give Back-Bench Members a free vote on the matter?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I support the Sunday trading Bill. I do not believe that the restriction of choice should apply to Sunday trading when it does not apply to so many other things on a Sunday. People must make their own choice.

Mr. Philip Oppenheim: Will my right hon. Friend join many people in congratulating the Leader of the Opposition on his efforts to rid the Labour party of the hard Left, but would she remind him——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Questions must relate to the Prime Minister's responsibility.

Q4. **Miss Maynard** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Miss Maynard: In view of the Government's insistence that the miners should have held a ballot before their recent industrial action, why do the Government not support the Fleet street print workers, who held a ballot and voted 7:1 in favour of industrial action?

The Prime Minister: I notice that the hon. Lady referred to the miners. It is one year ago today since the miners' strike was ended—a strike which the Opposition supported through the bitterest, cold weather. The printers made their own choice on a ballot, and must take the reasonable consequences which flow from the choice which they freely made.

Q5. **Mr. Hanley** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hanley: Yesterday, in another place, it was suggested that drug traffickers should be injected with their own poison and left out in the street to die. Despite what might be the initial attractions of that policy, does my right hon. Friend agree that a better policy would be to fight demand by effective education, to fight supply by international co-operation through intelligence and drug eradication programmes, and to fight the profits of drug trafficking by imposing long prison sentences, equivalent to those for premeditated murder, and by confiscation of the profits of drug traffickers?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend that we must fight drug trafficking through education, Customs, the police and the courts. I am sure that he ardently supports the Bill now before the House to enable us to confiscate the proceeds of drug trafficking, which I hope will be speedily set on its way so that we may carry it into action.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister said yesterday that she likes an upsurge of patriotism, but she likes it accompanied by action. Is her idea of action or, indeed, patriotism, selling off assets built up by the contributions of the British people? They have put up. Does she believe that they should shut up?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is aware that, by Tuesday, we shall have some idea of the numbers of people who wish to bid and an idea of the approximate amount. I can say no more until all those bids are in and have been properly and thoroughly discussed.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister reminds us that next Tuesday is the deadline. Does that not stand on their head her claims yesterday and previously that consortia of bids could be built up for an offer for which there is no prospectus, but for which there is a deadline? Does that not make her claims absolute nonsense and show that she was never serious about competitive tendering and bidding in any case?

The Prime Minister: No. The right hon. Gentleman is talking nonsense. Those who are interested in making genuine bids—the trade unions could have done the self-same thing—could have obtained the information from the Department of Trade and Industry or British Leyland.

Mr. Kinnock: That is another of Maggie's myths. Does she not know that the total combined assets of British trade unions are less than £500 million, and that it is nonsense to suggest that the trade unions could mount a bid for purchase? I ask her again: when the British people have bought and paid for a high technology company, many parts of which are turning into profit, why does she want to flog it off to foreigners?

The Prime Minister: If the right hon. Gentleman has such faith, he must know that there are many pension funds, with enormous assets belonging to the unions, which could purchase into that company. The right hon. Gentleman wants British Leyland to be a permanent pensioner on the pockets of his constituents. We do not —*[Interruption.]*

Q6. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Freeman: Will my right hon. Friend stick to her plans for public expenditure and not pursue policies such as those of the Opposition, whose plans call for an increase in value added tax of almost 41 per cent.?

The Prime Minister: It would be our purpose to do exactly what my hon. Friend has said. It is no part of our policy to try to take an increasing proportion of people's earnings through income tax. We believe that they work harder so that they have more for their own families, not to pay more to the Government.

Women (Retirement Age)

3.31 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the ruling yesterday of the European Court of Justice on Britain's compulsory retirement age for women.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): We are studying the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Justice yesterday in the Marshall case. The court has decided clearly that a general policy operated by an employer concerning dismissal which involves the dismissal of a woman solely because she had attained or passed the qualifying age for a state pension, where this was different for men and women, constituted discrimination on the ground of sex contrary to a directive accepted by the United Kingdom in 1976. The judgment establishes that that directive can be relied upon by any employee of a state authority.

The Government's Sex Discrimination Bill is being considered today on Second Reading in another place. We will be considering urgently whether any amendments should be made to that Bill to clarify the law and to comply with the directive in the light of this judgment.

I should make it clear that the directive and the judgment have no application to the determination of the qualifying age for state retirement pension purposes as this is expressly excepted by another European directive.

Mr. Prescott: The House will be grateful for the Paymaster General's statement. It has made it clear that he is considering the possibility of using the Sex Discrimination Bill to correct the ruling of the European court. As the ruling applies only to the public sector, will the Paymaster General make it clear that any changes that he has in mind will be equally applicable to the private sector and to public sector industries that are presently being privatised by legislation which is before the House, and that none of those workers is discriminated against by the process of privatisation?

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the ruling provides an opportunity to harmonise public sector practice? Mrs. Marshall was forced into early retirement at the age of 60, but apparently that does not apply to other public employees such as judges and the Prime Minister. Does the Paymaster General accept that this is the time for a radical reassessment of the common pension age, as recommended by the Social Services Select Committee, as a contribution to reducing mass unemployment, which has once again been announced to be at a record high level? The House would welcome action in that regard rather than a fiddling of the unemployment figures, which is what the Government spend so much time doing.

Mr. Clarke: As the hon. Gentleman says, the judgment has left a little unclear the status of private sector employees. The court has not resolved that matter. We shall have to consider that. The Sex Discrimination Bill may give us an opportunity to do so.

Before the judgment, we believed that we were complying with the directive, which was accepted by the previous Labour Government. They thought that the legislation that they introduced complied with the directive. We shall have plenty of time to consider these issues as the Bill makes its way through Parliament.

As for public sector practices, employment policies such as this and whether employees will be required to retire remain matters for individual employers. Not all public sector employers have the same practice. My recollection is that not all health authorities have the same practice, and this was a health authority. The ruling makes it clear that any policy of an employer should not discriminate between men and women. If there is a requirement to retire at a set age, it should be the same for both sexes.

I have already said that the judgment has no implications — no direct effect, anyway — for the commencing age for retirement pension. That has been expressly excepted by other directives. It has of course been considered by the Government recently. The House will be aware that we raised the matter in the Green Paper on pensions policy. In the White Paper we stated:

> "The Government's aim remains that of increased flexibility. We will continue to examine possible ways of moving towards the decade of retirement."

That is a suggestion that there should be more individual choice at what age people, whatever their sex, might retire between the ages of 60 and 70. The practical problems remain unsolved.

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that more and more people in the country are becoming fed up with having critical domestic problems which affect a vast number of people and touch the pocket of every taxpayer decided in the European court? Does he agree that the time has come when the European Convention on Human Rights should be incorporated into domestic law so that these cases can be decided by British judges in British courts?

Mr. Clarke: I know that such feelings are quite strong. I have to point out to my hon. and learned Friend that it was not the European Court of Human Rights but the European Court of Justice which was involved. It arises from European Community commitments accepted by the previous Government who agreed to this directive and legislated, believing that they complied with it.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): Will the Paymaster General accept that the judgment of the European court should come as no surprise whatever to those who have paid attention to the recommendations of our own Equal Opportunities Commission? When the Government are considering what to do about this judgment, will the Paymaster General undertake that they will pay particular attention to the 1·7 million working women who do not have an entitlement to pension at 60 because their pension rights depend upon the age of their husbands?

Mr. Clarke: I have said that the judgment did not come as a great surprise to me. Before it got to the court, the British advocate-general, a very distinguished one, had already ruled that this was likely to be the case. This House passed sex discrimination legislation believing that we were complying with the directive. Therefore, I rather agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments.

The questions of retirement policy have been considered by the House and have been put forward for

public debate by the Government in the Green Paper. They are being considered at present in the discussions on the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Remembering that many occupational pension schemes are now moving to an earlier and common retirement date, should we not grasp the opportunity of this judgment by the European court and begin either to move towards a common retirement date, perhaps 62½ moving in half yearly periods upwards and downwards respectively for women and men, or to think in terms of the flexible retirement age to which my right hon. and learned Friend has referred, accepting that, if we were to do that, at least for a period, men who retired earlier would probably have to accept a pro rata reduction? Do we not take powers under the Social Security Bill now going through Parliament to move precisely in this directon?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is taking me back into extremely interesting areas which are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. As I said a moment ago, the Government canvassed in the Green Paper which we produced on pensions policy and social security reform the question whether it might be possible to move over to a more flexible system of retirement based on individual choice. In the response which the Government received, nobody solved the extremely difficult problems and nobody came up with any solution that would demand instant support in the House or anywhere else. In the White Paper the Government have made it clear that we are still reviewing policy in this area.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): The Select Committee proposed that the Government should move towards a flexible retirement age of 63 for both sexes within a reasonable time. That proposal was also included in the White Paper. Why did not the Minister include that proposal in the Bill which is now in Standing Committee? Would not that have been the easiest way to deal with it?

Mr. Clarke: If I were in the hon. Lady's position, I should probably take this opportunity to raise my views on retirement policy. However, I have to make it clear that the judgment of the European court has no bearing upon the qualifying age for retirement pensions in this country.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that for many people this judgment will be very welcome? Many of us would indeed like our male colleagues to be given the opportunity to be equal with us and to be able to retire earlier. Does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that retirement does not necessarily mean a pension? If we are all to have a generous pension for the many years in which we hope to enjoy retirement, we will have to pay a lot more for our pensions.

Mr. Clarke: I, too, welcome this judgment in some ways. The feeling about arbitrary retirement ages is growing, particularly among those in many industries who are approaching retirement age. However, there is, by law, no set retirement age in this country. That matter has to be decided by employers and employees. There is a qualifying age at which somebody is free to retire and obtain a state retirement pension. That is a very difficult matter which is best discussed in connection with legislation that is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Ms. Harriet Harman (Peckham): What action will the Secretary of State take to make sure that this decision is understood and acted upon by those who are responsible for public sector employees at local level so that the benefits of this decision can be seen and taken up straight away?

Mr. Clarke: I hope that the House will allow me a little more time in which to consider with care all of the detailed implications of the judgment. I expect that most public sector employers will now be reviewing their policies. If their policies lay down a set retirement age that is different, as between men and women, they should anxiously be reviewing those policies as quickly as possible.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend first remind the House of the cost to the Exchequer if there were to be a common retirement age of 60 for both men and women? Secondly, will he tell the House what the saving would be if there were to be a common retirement age of 65?

Mr. Clarke: I am trying to avoid answering questions on social security matters, but I do not think that my right hon. Friend would object to my saying that those who believe that this question will be solved by reducing the state retirement pension age for men from 65 to 60 are ignoring its quite horrendous cost, which would be unacceptable in any foreseeable circumstances.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): In view of the humiliating number of cases that have been taken from this country to the European Court of Justice and the vast number of judgments against this country, is it not time for a complete review of the sex discrimination laws?

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted to be able to tell the hon. Lady that I hope that the Sex Discrimination Bill will receive its Second Reading today in the House of Lords. My right hon. and noble Friend is to present it there. It gives us the happy opportunity to review all of these questions. The background to this judgment is that in 1976 the previous Labour Government accepted a European directive. The Sex Discrimination Act was passed in either 1975 or 1976 which, it was believed, complied with the directive. We have discovered as a result of the judgment of the European court that we have to review our position.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Does not this judgment demonstrate in an appalling way the extent of our loss of sovereignty, since this foreign court can implement above our heads a directive which has never been discussed for one minute in the House of Commons and which entirely ignores domestic legislation that we passed to implement it in our own way? Bearing in mind what has happened, will the Minister and his colleagues be very careful indeed about the single European Act which will further erode our right to control the flow of regulations and directives out of the Common Market by majority vote?

Mr. Clarke: I shall look at the parliamentary record to see whether the draft directive of 1975 was considered by this House, and also to see how much debate there was on the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and whether my hon.

[Mr. Clarke]

Friend took part in the debate when we believed that we were complying with this directive. The fact is that another Bill is now starting in another place. Although I would not encourage my hon. Friend to make lengthy speeches on it when the Bill reaches the House of Commons, he will have every opportunity to do so, and we shall be able to consider all those matters then. This directive was accepted by a British Government, and we believed that it had been complied with by the British Parliament now has every opportunity to review it in legislation that is going through the House.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister has been at pains to describe the limitations of the judgment, but does he believe that it is appropriate to make a commitment to a flexible and equal retirement age and not to interpret the judgment in the most restrictive way?

Mr. Clarke: Unlike some other countries, we do not have a retirement age in the way that the hon. Gentleman suggests. Each employer and his employees are free to determine the retirement age of their occupation. The court has ruled that it is sex discrimination to have a different age for men from that of women. This House determines in legislation, which is not my responsibility, at what age men and women qualify for a state retirement pension. Once that age is passed, it is up to them to decide whether they wish to retire and take the pension or to stay in employment. I am told that one in five women between the ages of 60 and 65 are in employment.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): How is the judgment likely to affect the decision of one of my constituents, who, in 1972 at the age of 46, claimed to have changed from a man to a woman? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is an important and technical matter.

Mr. Jessel: As it was ruled by Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member for Woodspring (Sir P. Dean), the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, that no decision need be taken until the age of 60 was attained, and as that is now imminent, why has the European court prolonged the confusion of my constituent? Should not the court have considered that first?

Mr. Clarke: I doubt whether my hon. Friend's constituent had his or her retirement pension in mind as the main consideration when making that unusual decision a few years ago. I am delighted to say that when the time comes to decide whether he or she qualifies for a retirement pension at the age of 60, it will not be my responsibility but that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. A private notice question is an extension of Question Time.

Business of the House

3.47 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House whether he will state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 3 MARCH—There will be a debate on Welsh affairs on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Afterwards a debate on a motion to take note of EC documents relating to the European social fund. Details of the documents concerned will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 4 MARCH — Until about Seven o'clock, completion of remaining stages of the Housing (Scotland) Bill.

Second Reading of the Salmon Bill *[Lords]*.

WEDNESDAY 5 MARCH—There will be a debate on a Government motion to take note of the White Paper on developments in the European Community January to June 1985—(Cmnd. 9627).

Afterwards, motion on the annual report from the European Court of Auditors for 1984.

Details of the EC documents relevant to these debates will be given in the *Official Report*.

THURSDAY 6 MARCH—Opposition Day (9th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "The Plight of the Elderly".

Motion relating to the Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation) Regulations Order.

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at Seven o'clock.

FRIDAY 7 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 10 MARCH—There will be a debate on a motion to take note of the 1986 farm price proposals and the proposed milk outgoers scheme. Details of relevant EC documents will be given in the *Official Report*.

[Debate on Monday 3 March

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

Relevant European Documents

(a) 7711/85	*Guidelines for management of European Social Fund 1986-88.*
(b) 9901/85	*European Social Fund: Accession of Spain and Portugal.*
(c) 9854/85	*European Social Fund: Report for 1984.*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(a) HC 5–xxx (1984-85) paragraph 7.
(b) HC 21–iii (1985-86) paragraph 1.
(c) HC 21–iv (1985-86) paragraph 2.

Wednesday 5 March

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EC

Relevant European Document

(d) 8616/85	*Commission opinion on amendments to the EEC Treaty.*

COURT OF AUDITORS REPORT

Relevant European Document

(e) OJ C326	*The Court of Auditors Report for 1984.*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee

(d) HC 5–xxxi (1984-85) paragraph 1, and HC 264 (1985-86) (First Special Report: The Single European Act and Parliamentary Scrutiny)
(e) HC 21–ix (1985-86) paragraph 2.

Monday 10 March
CAP PRICE FIXING
Relevant European Documents

(f) 10174/85	*Milk production: outgoers scheme.*
(g) 8480/85	*Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.*
(h) 4130/86	*Future of Community Agriculture.*
(i) 10492/85	*Reform of Cereals Regime.*
(j) 4150/86	*Reform of Beef Regime.*
(k) 4075/86	*Situation in agricultural markets 1985.*
(l) 4963/86	*CAP Prices.*

Relevant Reports of European Legislation Committee
(f) HC 21–iii (1985-86) paragraph 2.
(g) HC 5–xxx (1984-85) paragraph 10.
(h) HC 21–ix (1985-86) paragraph 1.
(i) HC 21–vii (1985-86) paragraph 2.
(j) HC 21–x (1985-86) paragraph 3.]

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. Today, another set of increased unemployment figures has been published, and the Government still have not given time for a debate on the record unemployment or on the proposals of the Select Committee on Employment on improvement in provision for the long-term unemployed. Will the right hon. Gentleman set a date for such a debate?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the independent review body, which was established under the new colliery review procedure, recommended in one of its first reports that Bates' colliery in Northumberland should be kept open for at least another two years? The National Coal Board has overruled that decision. In the light of the implications of the NCB's decision on the validity of the review procedure, does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the general principles of that review procedure should be a matter for early debate? Will he take account of the fact that Mr. Ian MacGregor has posed a new series of threats to collieries by referring to the fluctuations in oil prices? I suggest that that is also an apposite matter for debate in the near future.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the raids earlier today by the fraud squad, apparently in connection with the bullion transactions of Johnson Matthey, and the large-scale evasion of value added tax? As these are clearly matters of public concern and economic significance, will the right hon. Gentleman give an undertaking that we shall have at least a statement from the appropriate Minister and preferably a debate early next week?

Mr. Biffen: I shall look into the matter of the fraud squad raids which have been reported today and ascertain whether it is appropriate for a statement to be made. I shall get in touch with the right hon. Gentleman through the usual channels.

The right hon. Gentleman will know that Bates' colliery features in next week's business in an Adjournment debate. I should certainly like to look at the point more widely. The right hon. Gentleman will realise that the National Union of Mineworkers has been given leave to take legal action against the NCB. I should want to satisfy myself of the exact position and ascertain whether the matter is sub judice. We can consider that matter through the usual channels.

As to a debate on the report by the Select Committee, I have said that we should consider this matter through the usual channels, and I re-emphasise that. Through the good offices of the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), unemployment will be debated on 7 March.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): As the London Business School and the CBI have just issued economic forecasts, would it not be a good idea to have a debate soon on the economy generally? This would enable the Government to reaffirm their determination to stick to their economic strategy, which is proving successful, and to confirm that we can look forward to even lower inflation in the months ahead.

Mr. Biffen: I appreciate my hon. Friend's sound proposals. I am certain that any such debate would enable Conservative Members to affirm their full-hearted support for a Government policy which is vindicated by the latest findings of the London Business School and the CBI. However, in a mood of greater realism, I have to observe that we shall soon be within the Budget period, and I think that we shall have plenty of opportunities then to discuss that matter.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that his reply about having a debate on Bates' colliery on an Adjournment motion is not satisfactory? If the closure is to go ahead and such a breach of faith is to be accepted, this could be applied in many other areas and every other coalfield would be involved. Will the right hon. Gentleman undertake to look at this matter so that this breach of faith can be discussed in the House where the promises and pledges which were given are now being broken?

Mr. Biffen: I was giving the House a little more by saying that the matter can be discussed through the usual channels. Perhaps those magic words "usual channels" are unknown to the right hon. Gentleman, although I think that, from his previous incarnation, he must have at least a nodding acquaintance with them. I said, just for the convenience of the House, that the topic will be debated anyway. I agree that an Adjournment debate in no sense measures against the importance of the topic.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, as one of Parliament's representatives on the Council of Europe, I support that Council's Court of Human Rights concept but I begin to part company with it when it starts meddling with domestic legislation, as appears to be the case with the European Court of Justice? In view of the real anxieties on both sides of the House about this matter, is it not time that we had a detailed debate on the subject?

Mr. Biffen: This has been the topic of exchanges at this stage of the week in the past. I do not wish to hold out any false hope to my hon. Friend, but I will look at the matter again because my hon. Friend represents a view that is rightly held.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): In view of the widespread interest in the House and in the country about the future of historic buildings and the arts in the post-reorganisation of local government, can the Leader of the House state when there will be a debate on our

[Mr. David Alton]

prayer against Statutory Instrument No. 148, which deals with those matters? Will the right hon. Gentleman say when there will be a debate on the problems of safety at nuclear installations and the siting of nuclear dumps after the announcement of the Nirex sites earlier this week?

Mr. Biffen: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I shall look at the matter through the usual channels. On his second point, I do not think that I can hold out any hope of an early debate on this subject in Government time, although I acknowledge its importance.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the undoubted fulsome co-operation that he has just promised through the usual channels will not carry on for the rest of the day—we have had enough for this time—and that later in the day there will not be full co-operation through the usual channels on the vote we shall have on the procedure motion tonight on a report of the Procedure Committee?

Mr. Biffen: Only somebody afflicted by congenital suspicion would make such a remark.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): May I press the Leader of the House for a debate on the Select Committee on Employment's report on long-term unemployment? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure me that we will discuss the report in Government time and not on an Adjournment debate or at Question Time? Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that 1·4 million people in this country are compulsorily retired because of the Government's policy — some as young as 18 years of age — without any redress from the European court?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman will have heard my reply to his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition. He will also appreciate that I cannot go beyond that, but I hope that he will be reasonably reassured.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment that the Opposition have not allocated their time on Thursday to the alliance so that the SDP can discuss its document "Competition and the Consumer"? The reason for that is that the document is designed

"to deter companies from entering into mergers for reasons of opportunism or aggrandisement rather than efficiency".

This is drawn from its practical experience of the Liberal party.

Mr. Biffen: That is a neat point. No doubt the Liberal-Social group will have heard what my hon. Friend has said and will take that into account when it plans its use of Opposition days.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Will the Leader of the House recognise the widespread hostility that would be felt by those of us who are opposed to the Shops Bill if in the near future the Government sought to bring it forward, especially in view of the considerable overwork being done by Standing Committees and the inability of the Official Reporters to provide those Committees now sitting on Home Office matters with reports of the proceedings of the Bills in progress?

Mr. Biffen: I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the great skill and hard work that is undertaken by the Official Reporters. It is perfectly true that at present they have some difficulties—I hope modest in character —which we very much hope can be avoided in future.

As for the introduction of the Shops Bill to the House, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Bill has now completed its proceedings in another place and that there are no plans for its Second Reading in this House next week.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that the decisions regarding whether and when the man on the deregulated omnibus should have a pension should be taken by a sovereign Government and a sovereign state and not by foreign courts of justice, however pre-eminent they be?

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes his point with great skill and directness. None the less, as the law in this country now operates, that decision was taken elsewhere. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) said, there may be a case for this matter to be debated in the House.

Mr. Alexander Eadie (Midlothian): Further to the matter of Bates' colliery, will the Leader of the House realise that the Government have a special responsibility in that matter in any reflections or discussions that they may have? It was the Government who said that the agreement was sacrosanct. The agreement that it replaced was one where the coal board was judge, jury and executioner. If the coal board is allowed to implement that sacrosanct agreement, we are saying to it that it can be the jury and the executioner. Will he consider that matter because it is of great public importance in relation to the Government's credibility and what they mean by "sacrosanct"?

Mr. Biffen: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that is a matter of great public interest. That is why I responded in the way that I did to the Leader of the Opposition and said that we would be happy to consider the matter through the usual channels. I am entitled to observe that, as I understand it, the National Union of Mineworkers is taking legal action against the coal board's decision.

Mr. John Ryman (Blyth Valley): The Leader of the House is either unwilling or unable to understand yesterday's High Court judgment when Mr. Justice Webster, on the application of the National Union of Mineworkers, granted it leave to apply for judicial review and issued an interim injunction. Despite that interim injunction, the National Coal Board at Bates' pit in my constituency, through the management, has flouted that injunction, thereby perhaps making it necessary for Mr. MacGregor and Mr. Archibald, the National Coal Board regional director, to be brought before the court for contempt of court. Will the Leader of the House wipe the supercilious grin from off his face and begin to treat the matter seriously? Over 800 jobs are at stake and the National Coal Board, aided and abetted by the Government, is acting unlawfully, as found by the High Court. Will he make a statement on the Government's view of the matter and accede to the application made by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition, and give Government time to debate the matter next week?

Mr. Biffen: The first rather minor observation I should like to make is that, as I listened against the amplifiers to hear the hon. Gentleman's remarks, he must have been a

contortionist if he could see my face, let alone decide whether it had a smirk on it. As to the point of substance, I cannot comment upon all the matters which may or may not come before the court. I gave a reasonable answer to the Leader of the Opposition, and I think that we should leave it there.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the grave anxiety expressed by prison officers at Leicester prison, in my constituency, at the discovery that one of the inmates is suffering from an AIDS-related virus and that last night, after a ballot, they decided to take industrial action, which includes leaving the inmate at the magistrates' court tomorrow when they take him there on remand? If that matter is not satisfactorily resolved, may we have a statement about it from the Home Secretary?

Mr. Biffen: I shall most certainly refer that matter, the significance of which I understand, to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary with a view to its being considered for a statement.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Bearing in mind the fact that the Chancellor of the Exchequer told the House of Commons that the main reason for saving the Johnson Matthey Bank was to sustain confidence in the bullion market and accepting today's announcement that bullion has been smuggled into this country, sold at below market prices and followed by VAT claims at full market prices, which can hardly sustain confidence in the bullion market, will he arrange for a debate next week on the future of the bullion market combined with a debate on why Johnson Matthey Bank was bailed out and the Government's cover-up?

Mr. Biffen: I think that I can help the hon. Gentleman to the extent that I commented upon that topic in response to the Leader of the Opposition. I do not think that I can help the hon. Gentleman beyond that.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend take account of the discourtesy and crude rudeness that the Queen has had to endure in New Zealand and in other parts of the Commonwealth tour, and the consternation that the country feels about that which is related to the dangers presented to her by the inadequate security cover in New Zealand? Will he undertake to bring the matter before the House to see what the Government can do to strengthen the position to prevent future such unpleasantness to that greatly loved lady?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that there will be great sympathy throughout the House for the view that my hon. Friend has expressed, but it is possibly more appropriate for the matter to be the subject of an early-day motion than a Government initiative.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House take up the challenge that has been thrown down to him about a debate on the colliery review procedure and Bates' colliery, in particular, in view of the Government's inconsistency and double standards? My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) referred to the Johnson Matthey matter and the fact that the Government bailed out an uneconomic unit of production—a bank—during the middle of the pit strike, costing taxpayers £100 million. The Government have been engaged in a cover-up. We now know that there has been gold smuggling. The Bates' colliery miners heard about the Johnson Matthey Bank being bailed out. Why should they and all the victimised miners by the subject of the Government's hypocritical standards when the City of London bankers can do what they like and get away with murder at the taxpayers' expense?

Mr. Biffen: The point was put succinctly, and I thought persuasively, by the Leader of the Opposition. On this occasion I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is doing better than the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. David Wigley (Caernarfon): Is the Leader of the House aware of early-day motion 500 about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill in which 114 hon. Members from both sides of the House have expressed their anxiety at the way in which the Government, through their consultation paper, are trying to emasculate that Bill and remove clauses relating to caring for the carers?

[That this House expresses concern at the recently published consultation documents relating to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill; would regret any steps that might remove or emasculate vital clauses of this Bill, including those which safeguard the interests of carers, of persons leaving long-stay hospitals or leaving full-time education by providing a coherent personal plan to meet their individual needs; and while accepting the duty to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy, declares that it is inconceivable that services to meet the needs of disabled people can be adequately planned if they are not subject to prior assessment; recognises the overwhelming support for these objectives of the Bill amongst disablement organisations; and calls on the Government to allow the Bill to reach the Statute Book without weakening its provisions.]

All the major disablement organisations have expressed similar anxiety. Will the Leader of the House find time next week to discuss with the Departmnts involved with the Bill a reconsideration of the matter to get the legislation on the statute book?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that there is a general convention that my responsibilities do not cover the passage of legislation in Standing Committees. I take note of what he says and I shall draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Instead of discussing the European Court of Auditors and its work on Wednesday, will my right hon. Friend make it possible for us to debate the role of local district auditors and local government abuses so that hon. Members like myself can report on the latest problems in Leicester where a Nelson Mandela park at a cost of £13,000 is being formally opened on 23 March, and there is a public relations unit costing £150,000 and a twinning arrangement with Nicaragua costing £7,000? That money has all been paid by the ratepayers, and to cap it all there is an 80 per cent. rate rise. May we have an opportunity for the district auditor to justify why he has not yet brought in the commissioners?

Mr. Biffen: At the moment we have a broadly satisfactory division of labour. The Government are responsible for finding time for debating the affairs of the nation, and my hon. Friend, with utmost skill, is

[Mr. Biffen]

remarkably successful in enabling the House to know about the difficulties of Leicester. As he does very well, I wish him further success with the skill he deploys in bringing the case before the House.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On the subject of next Wednesday's White Paper debate on the EEC, as it was the Milan summit of 1985 that produced—albeit against the Government's wishes—the new single joint European Act, will the Leader of the House confirm that it will be in order to debate that matter on Wednesday? Has he seen the Vote today which shows that the EEC scrutiny committee is producing a special report upon the joint European Act? Will he do all that he can to ensure that that report is drawn to the attention of hon. Members before the debate on Wednesday?

Mr. Biffen: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's first point is yes. The answer to the second is that I shall look into the matter and be in touch with him.

Mr. Michael Fallon (Darlington): With regard to the debate on the future of Bates' colliery, is my right hon. Friend aware that no jobs are at stake and that all the workers there have been offered jobs at neighbouring collieries? If we are to have a debate in the House every time that workers in an industry are transferred from one plant or facility to another, we might be very busy.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent and lively contribution which would be even more significant if we were debating the subject. He will appreciate that I try to avoid being drawn into the merits or the content of possible debates. However, I shall take note of what he says.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Is the Leader of the House aware of the problem that will develop in the areas of the metropolitan county councils, particularly west Yorkshire, following their abolition? Is he aware of the large rate increases which the ratepayers of those areas will face and the reduction in services, particularly in the fire service and public transport? Is he also aware that further unemployment will be added to the overburdened rate of unemployment in west Yorkshire? Will he allow time for the House to discuss the serious problems which are facing the ratepayers in west Yorkshire because of the abolition of the county council and the fact that we will be faced with massive rate increases just to stand still following the abolition of the county?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman's contribution followed what he said a week or two ago. Of course, I will report his views to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): In view of the unsatisfactory reply which the Prime Minister gave to my earlier question, will the Leader of the House recognise that there is a need for an early debate on the future of British Airways? First, there is a clear suggestion within the work force that privatisation will not now go ahead. What will go ahead is the refutation of the assurances given by Sir John Nott that British Airways will not be broken up. In fact, the management of British Airways is negotiating to sell off British Airways Helicopters in direct contradiction to a categorical assurance given by the chief executive of British Airways less than a month ago. In fact, Colin Bishop of British Midland Airways is known to be looking to buy the highland division of British Airways and also its routes out of Birmingham. In the light of those revelations and the characters of the people British Airways appears to be dealing with, there is an urgent need to debate what is going on in British Airways.

Mr. Biffen: I take note of what the hon. Gentleman has said. It would probably be best if, in the first instance, I referred it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Do the Government propose to bring to the House without delay the writ for the Fulham by-election, or are they too scared?

Mr. Biffen: I promise the hon. Gentleman that the writ will be produced by the normal conventions and with a reasonable expectation of time. We shall see whose knees knock the loudest when we approach polling day.

Johnson Matthey Bankers

4.13 pm

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, to discuss a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"Johnson Matthey Bankers' gold bullion transactions and the refusal of the Prime Minister to establish a public tribunal of inquiry."

The House has been attempting to discuss the problem of Johnson Matthey Bankers since October 1984 and there has never been a specific debate on that issue. It has many ramifications. It involves the Prime Minister because of her refusal to establish a public tribunal of inquiry on 2 August 1985. It involves the Chancellor of the Exchequer because of his repeated assurances over the Governor of the Bank of England's claim that the bullion trading of JMB was sound and, of course, it involves the judgment of the Governor of the Bank of England.

The matter is specific because there is £175 million of public money at risk because of the decision of the Governor of the Bank of England to rescue JMB and because of the Government's acceptance, on a number of occasions, that that money should not only be maintained but increased. It is therefore a matter that will have to come before the House.

It is my submission that it is urgent because today we have seen JMB's headquarters raided by Customs and Excise under a warrant, to look at the transactions in the gold bullion market. We know that around 30 other premises in the country have also been similarly raided to see what has been happening. I understand that there have been 12 arrests, none of them involving personnel of Johnson Matthey Bankers. Customs and Excise believes that about £7·25 million worth of gold bullion may have been smuggled into the country from April last year until 11 days ago.

It goes much wider and deeper than that. There is reason to believe that the smuggling and purchase of gold at a below market price by JMB has been continuing for a considerable time. It is on the issue of the bullion market of JMB that I have been probing the Government, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister for a long time. *[Laughter.]* The correspondence on this matter is substantial and if any right hon. or hon. Member wishes to see the correspondence I would be happy to show it.

The matter is urgent because not only is £175 million at stake, but the reputation of the City of London, in particular the reputation of the Governor of the Bank of England, is considerably at stake. Solemn assurances were given. The Governor of the Bank of England gave me an assurance on 21 December. He wrote:

"Your assertions, and attempts to demonstrate that the bullion operations of JMB are basically unsound, would, I believe, diminish the confidence of its customers and counterparties and their willingness to do business with it, making it more difficult for JMB to trade profitably in the future."

The letter also said:

"The advice which you have received is ill-informed and the conclusions you draw ill-founded."

There is no doubt that JMB's bullion market transactions have been operating under a considerable cloud and the concerns that I expressed were both well informed and well founded. I submit that when the reputation of the Governor of the Bank of England, as well as the judgment of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister, is at stake, that is a matter of considerable urgency.

I wrote to the Prime Minister specifically, urgently and privately on 1 August last year to ask her to establish a public tribunal of inquiry. That was not done lightly. It was done in the knowledge that two members of Johnson Matthey Bankers had just been dismissed. It was clear that there was more behind it than the explanation that was given. We have had constant difficulty in getting at what is really happening. The Price Waterhouse report has not been revealed. The hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) has been vigilant on one other aspect, relating to the industrial and marketing context. On the bullion market, we have not had proper bank accounts published by the Bank of England and we have not had the results of the investigations. I submit that it is now time that the issue was discussed in the House as an urgent and specific matter. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will accede to my request for a debate on the Adjournment.

Mr. Speaker: The right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen) asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"Johnson Matthey Bankers' gold bullion transactions and the need to establish a public tribunal of inquiry."

I have listened with care to what the right hon. Member has said and I in no way underestimate the importance of it. I also listened to the exchanges in the House earlier this afternoon. I regret that I do not consider the matter that he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

BILL PRESENTED

Justice for Mineworkers

Mr. Tony Benn, supported by Mr. Dennis Skinner, Mr. Martin Redmond, Mr. Bill Michie, Mr. Gavin Strang, Miss Joan Maynard, Mr. Bob Clay, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Tam Dalyell, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. Eric Heffer and Ms. Jo Richardson, presented a Bill to provide for a review of all cases of miners jailed as a result of the 1984-85 dispute in the mining industry; for the reinstatement of miners sacked for activities arising out of the dispute; for the reimbursement of monies confiscated as a result of fines, sequestration and receivership; and for purposes connected therewith: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 90.]

Procedure

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Lord Privy Seal to move the motion, it might be helpful if I remind the House that this is not a general procedure debate but is confined to the subject matter of the reports before us. They concern public Bill procedure, questions lost when the sitting is broken, short speeches and the operation of Standing Order No. 10. After three hours, I shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of the first motion and motions 2 to 12 on the Order Paper. I have selected all the amendments to the motions under consideration, but not the sub-amendments to the amendment to motion 1.

4.19 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Second, Third and Fourth Reports of the Select Committee on Procedure of Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Papers Nos. 49, 396 and 623) and of the First Report of the Select Committee on Procedure of this Session (House of Commons Paper No. 42).

As you have said, Mr. Speaker, we may discuss also the following motions:

No. 2,

That Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of bills) be amended, as follows:

Line 8, after 'committee', insert 'or to a special standing committee';

Line 11, after 'Member', insert '(except a motion to commit a bill to a special standing committee, which may be made only by a Minister of the Crown)'.

No. 3,

That Standing Order No. 70 (Public bills relating exclusively to Scotland) be amended by inserting, after the word 'Committee' in lines 32 and 41, the words '(or a special standing committee)'.

No. 4,

That—

(1) A special standing committee to which a bill has been committed shall have power during a period not exceeding 28 days (excluding periods when the House is adjourned for more than two days) from the committal of the bill, to send for persons, papers and records, and, for this purpose, to hold up to four morning sittings of not more than three hours each. At not more than three sittings oral evidence may be given and, unless the committee otherwise orders, all such evidence shall be given in public. Oral evidence shall be printed in the Official Report of the committee's debates together with such written evidence as the committee may order to be so printed.

(2) For the sittings referred to in paragraph (1) of this order, and nothwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 64 (Chairmen of standing committees), Mr. Speaker may appoint any Member other than a Minister of the Crown as chairman of a special standing committee.

(3) Except as provided in the foregoing paragraphs, the standings orders relating to standing committees and Standing Orders No. 84 (Withdrawal of documents before select committees), No. 88 (Entry of questions asked), No. 93 (Witnesses and evidence (select committees)) and No. 94 (Publication of evidence (select committees)) shall apply to any special standing committee.

(4) The question on any motion made by a Minister of the Crown to extend the period of 28 days mentioned in paragraph (1) of this order may be decided after the expiration of the time for opposed business and shall be put forthwith.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

No. 5,

That—

(1) When a Member is in the course of making a motion or moving an amendment at any stage of proceedings on a bill, a Member rising in his place may claim to move, 'That the question be now proposed', and, unless it shall appear to the chair that such motion is an abuse of the rules of the House, the question, 'That the question be now proposed' shall be put forthwith.

(2) This order shall apply in committee only when the Chairman of Ways and Means or either Deputy Chairman is in the chair.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.

No. 6,

That Standing Order No. 32 (Majority for closure) be amended, as follows:

Line 3, after 'debate)', insert 'or for the proposal of the question under Standing Order (Powers of chair to propose question)'.

No. 7,

That Standing Order No. 68 (Procedure in standing committees) be amended, as follows:

Line 24, after 'debate)', insert ', Standing Order (Powers of chair to propose question)';

Line 27, after 'closure', insert 'or for the proposal of the question'.

No. 8,

That Standing Order No. 31 (Closure of debate) be amended, as follows:

Line 18, leave out paragraph (3).

No. 9,

That Standing Order No. 58 (Third reading) be amended, as follows:

Line 4, leave out paragraph (2).

No. 10,

That—

(1) For the remainder of the present Session Mr. Speaker may announce at the commencement of public business that, because of the number of Members wishing to speak in a debate on one of the matters specified in paragraph (2) of this Order, he will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock on Monday to Thursday sittings, and between half-past eleven o'clock and one o'clock on Friday sittings, to speak for not more than ten minutes; and whenever Mr. Speaker has

made such an announcement he may, between those hours, direct any Member who has spoken for ten minutes in such a debate to resume his seat forthwith.

(2) This Order shall apply to debates on:

(a) the second reading of public bills;

(b) matters selected under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business) for consideration on allotted Opposition days; and

(c) motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown.

No. 11, That Standing Order No. 8 (Questions to Members) be amended, as follows:

Line 99, at end, add—

'(9) Any questions tabled for written answer on a day on which this House does not sit by reason of the continuance of a previous sitting shall be deemed to be questions for written answer on the next sitting day and shall appear on the order paper for that day.'

No. 12,

That Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) be amended as follows:

Line 4, after 'propose', insert 'in an application lasting not more than three minutes'.

This debate takes place as first order of business and is a tribute to the diligence of the Select Committee on Procedure under its Chairman, my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). For a three-hour debate, however, the reports before us represent a formidable agenda. The four reports deal respectively with public Bill procedure, questions lost when a sitting is broken, short speeches, and applications under Standing Order No. 10. It is a programme dominated by the Committee's proposals for the timetabling of Government legislation. Naturally, I shall devote much of my speech to that subject, but I shall deal with the other matters first.

The House will already be familiar with the Procedure Committee's general approach to short speeches. The matter was last debated on 31 October 1984. The House then passed a motion to give Mr. Speaker conditional powers to enforce a 10-minute speech limitation in defined circumstances. Having evaluated the experiment, during which the 10-minute limit was applied on 24 occasions, the Procedure Committee believes that it should continue for this Session.

While I have no great enthusiasm for formal limitation of speeches, I believe that it serves a valuable purpose in enabling more Back-Bench Members to take part in a debate. Nor has the experiment been as damaging to the character of debate as I feared. I shall vote for the experiment to continue for a further Session.

The first report of this Session recommends that an application under Standing Order No. 10 to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter which should have urgent consideration, should be limited to three minutes.

I agree with the recommendations of the Procedure Committee. Standing Order No. 10 applications now perform a variety of roles. Although it is not the purpose of the procedure, I suspect that the applications are something of a safety valve in their present form, in enabling the registration of political concern speedily, in prime time and where there is no provision for the arguments to be contested. All that could be put at risk if we drift into protracted speeches involving the substance of a matter, rather than its urgency. The change proposed by the Procedure Committee will not end this possible abuse, but it may check it.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Did my right hon. Friend notice the Select Committee's recommendation that the habit which the Chair has adopted, but which is not part of the Standing Order, that an application for a private notice question should interdict granting a Standing Order No. 10 application on the same matter, should be abolished because the criteria for the two are not the same? In a sense there is a right of reply to a private notice question, but there is none to an application under Standing Order No. 10. Moreover, an hon. Member can apply for a private notice question and, under the present rule, no hon. Member, except that hon. Member, is interdicted from getting an application under Standing Order No. 10 on the same facts. My right hon. Friend has not told the House his views about that recommendation, which is also germane to applications under Standing Order No. 10.

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that that recommendation is before the House this afternoon. I have sympathy with the Procedure Committee's point.

The Committee's third report of last Session dealt with a matter which is of rather more technical interest, about questions down for answer on a day when a sitting is lost because the previous day's sitting has continued. The Committee recommended that they should be deemed to be questions for written answer on the next sitting day and should appear on the Order Paper for that day. I commend to the House the principle of the Procedure Committee's recommendation. However, it should apply initially to questions for written answer, since they, rather than questions for oral answer, are designed to elicit information rather than trigger political points.

Since I first considered the matter, I have noticed that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) has an amendment which deals specifically with that point. I shall be interested to listen to the general mood of the House on the topic, and to react as the House desires.

The most important of the reports covered in today's debate concerns public Bill procedure, and was produced in April last year. It is an extensive and carefully researched investigation into a number of aspects of our procedure in this area. Its conclusions cover a number of points as well as the all-important topic of timetabling legislation. I shall not detain the House for long, but I shall refer to those other considerations.

The House will see from the Order Paper that we have accepted the Committee's recommendation that there should be permanent provision in Standing Orders for the Special Standing Committee procedure. Similarly, we seek to implement the proposal that there should be a new motion to deal with exceptionally long speeches in Committee or on Report. The motion would be:

"That the Question be now proposed".

The Procedure Committee recommended that the "Kangaroo closure" motion provided for in Standing Order No. 31 be repealed, and we have accepted that. The Committee also recommends the repeal of paragraph 2 of Standing Order No. 58. This removes the need for a

[Mr. Biffen]

blocking motion on Third Reading, and reverts to the former practice of an automatic opportunity, though not the necessity, for the House to debate the Third Reading of a Bill. I commend that.

Finally, I turn to the major recommendation of the Procedure Committee, which concerns the timetabling of legislation. The proposals are radical and have, deservedly, provoked considerable response. I shall first discuss the content of the proposals, and then the separate issue whether they should be accepted on the basis of experimentation.

The Procedure Committee proposes a much more formalised handling of the Committee stage of Government Bills. It suggests the establishment of a Legislative Business Committee made up of 13 senior hon. Members chosen by the Committee of Selection for a Parliament. The Committee would consider every Government Bill to be taken in Standing Committee. Where the Legislative Business Committee thought that a Bill was likely to take more than 25 hours in Standing Committee, it would seek to impose a timetable on that Bill in Standing Committee from the outset. If no informal agreement were reached about time for a Bill's remaining stages, the Legislative Business Committee should prescribe that also. Its recommendations should be implemented without debate, and it would be able to revise its original proposals for a timetabled Bill only if "entirely new factors" came to light. In addition, the Committee recommended that proceedings in Standing Committees should not continue beyond 10 pm.

The Procedure Committee sets out its concern that legislation should be as fully and carefully considered as possible. That is a judgment that I share. I judge that the Committee also believes that the extensive and automatic timetabling that it now proposes would benefit Government Back-Bench Members. There is no doubt that Government Back-Bench Members — I do not speak merely of this Parliament—have become Westminster's silent and unsung heroes.

The Procedure Committee also suggests, more controversially, that time and its use for delay is not a particularly potent factor.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I recognise that, unfortunately, some of my hon. Friends have put their names to the amendment in favour of the recommendation, but is it not of interest that a good number of hon. Members who support the proposed change are Conservative Members who came to the House in 1979 and 1983, and who are clearly bored to tears in Committee, without playing a role? Do they not recognise that since there will not always be Conservative Governments, they will be pleased when they are in opposition to be able to challenge what will undoubtedly be extremely controversial Labour Bills?

Mr. Biffen: I have a feeling that as the debate proceeds all that I can do is to lose votes for my side. Therefore, I have no intention of being drawn into the sort of value judgments about my hon. Friends' experience or motivation, or how wet they are behind the ears. I am certain that whether they have arrived recently, or are veterans of long standing, they are well able to make their judgments where the interests of the House lie in this matter, taking one Parliament with another.

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Biffen: I shall give way shortly. I have set myself the task of making a short speech, because I realise that one of the penalties of a prime time debate is that it is rather shorter than would otherwise be the case, and I shall be serving the House if I allow as many of my hon. Friends as possible to take part in the debate.

Mr. Morrison: Further to the point made by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), it is important that my right hon. Friend should recall that members of the Procedure Committee represented Members of all ages and experience in the House. The Committee was particularly well representative of hon. Members who had been in the House for a long time.

Mr. Biffen: I do not see why interrupting my speech served the purpose of answering the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick). However, that is a hazard that we all entertain from time to time.

I should like to return to the arguments about time not being a particularly potent factor. I do not see how evidence on that can be other than anecdotal, but in my judgment and experience the well-judged use of time can be crucial in political relationships. If I were concerned solely with the volume and dispatch of Government business, I would welcome such pervasive timetabling as is now suggested.

The House will be disposed to assume that the proposed arrangements will be operated in good faith and without an eye to party advantage. That may well be so, but I think I am entitled to observe that the Legislative Business Committee would have a Government majority, and that if the Government did not like any proposed timetable, it could be voted down or amended on the Floor of the House.

On balance, therefore, I think that the Government would be advantaged by the Procedure Committee proposals. All Governments are tomorrow's possible Opposition, and I think that my right hon. and hon. Friends, in their moments of supreme confidence, should consider, at least theoretically, how these proposals would bear upon the Opposition.

The Westminster political process is oblique and wide-ranging. It is like a seamless robe, which includes Government legislation, and much else. At present, the Opposition have open-ended opportunities for time and debate on legislation. If these are automatically extinguished, the Opposition will be deprived of a pressure point which is often used to secure accommodation from the Government, not merely on legislation, but on other points in the political process.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I am grateful to the Leader of the House for giving way because I know that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate. The right hon. Gentleman spoke about the Opposition and the Government in a way that ignores the fact that sometimes the opposition to the Government comes from their own side. Those who stand to lose most on this issue are Government Back Benchers who want to change what the Government are doing. If the proposal had been in operation at the time, the amendments to the Finance Bill in 1977 in my name, that of Audrey Wise and of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer would not have

been made, because the usual channels would not have existed and we would have been squeezed out of our use of time. Government Back Benchers who try to change the Government's view will lose, not gain, under this proposal.

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) makes that point much more powerfully than I intended to make it.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the view of many of our hon. Friends is distorted by the balance of this Parliament? Because the Government have a majority of 150, individual Government Back Benchers do not have the chance directly to influence the Government's legislative programme in quite the same way as they would if the parties were more evenly balanced.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a point which will stand well in his speech, and I do not disagree with him.

I make these points, of a general nature, on why I feel the proposals are unwise. I could detain the House further with some of the detailed arguments concerning the rigidities and difficulties of applying an automatic formula. I suspect that Bills which now generate little time or controversy would tend to acquire the characteristics needed for a timetable. I suspect there would be great difficulties for the Legislative Business Committee in predicting successfully which Bills had the potential for 25 hours Committee stage.

Then there is the question of the Finance Bill. The provisional collection of taxes already imposes an effective constraint on the time a Finance Bill can remain in Standing Committee. As the Finance Bill is not open to further consideration in the House of Lords, any clause or amendment cut out or restricted by the Procedure Committee timetable in Standing Committee has no further chance of consideration except in the relatively brief debate on Report.

I should mention also the rigidity which that would give to our relationship with the other place in the passage of legislation. I am sure that the Legislative Business Committee would seek to take account of the need for Bills to reach the other place in time to receive proper consideration there, but I am bound to say that I think the proposals would upset the flexibility which we now seek to maintain in arranging a balanced programme, particularly in the closing weeks before the summer recess.

These, however, are modest points compared with the fundamental character of these proposals. That character is that there is a somewhat one-sided trade-off to the advantage of the Government, and, supposedly, their supporters. First, Government Back Benchers are now to have the prospect of being able to talk in Standing Committee. However, without the weapon of time—the hon. Member for Perry Barr made this point—any posse of Back-Bench rebels will be treated with appropriate courtesy by the Whip. Much more tangibly, the Government will have all the advantages of an automatically timetabled programme. Is that the pre-condition for ministerial behaviour more responsive to the representations of Opposition or other dissenting groups? The very circumstances and the question convey the answer.

I say to the House that I cannot commend automatic timetabling. I respect the work of the Procedure Committee and its genuine commitment to parliamentary reform. My reaction, however, will not surprise the Procedure Committee in the light of the evidence that I gave it.

I should now like to turn to the parallel but separate issue of whether these automatic timetabling reforms should be proceeded upon for an experimental period.

The amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton suggests merely an experiment next Session. If the system is found to be unsatisfactory, he would doubtless say that it should be proved to be so and we should revert to the present arrangements, or make the changes that are found to be necessary. Since I have a measured and fundamental objection to automatic timetabling, I urge hon. Members not to pursue that approach.

Furthermore, there are particular problems of timing. We cannot be sure what the experiment's effect would be, but we can be sure that it would disturb the traditional way in which the Government and the Opposition have carried out their respective roles. The Procedure Committee recognised that its proposals would mean that new conventions would be developed. There was no suggestion that they would develop within a year. In the meantime, in a Session leading up to a general election, it would be harder for all to assess how well and effectively each party in this place was fulfilling its role of putting forward or opposing legislation. The election should be fought on the basis of what the Government have done, and that can be seen clearly only in the familiar context of the way in which business is currently conducted.

I have spoken at some length about automatic timetabling. I very much hope that this aspect of the Procedure Committee's work will be rejected. I say, however, to those who will be voting this evening, that the cause of reform is not solely invested in plans for automatic timetabling. I have sensed general dissatisfaction with the almost mechanical way something like 100 hours in Standing Committee has to be "clocked" before a timetable is secured. That provides for turgid pre-timetable debate and an ill-balanced consideration of the Bill subsequently. There is no reason why this situation should persist. Formerly, and in the early post-war years, timetables have been secured at an earlier time. These are all matters well within the evolution of parliamentary practice where broad understanding and mutual respect exists between the Government and the Opposition.

The Procedure Committee identified the problem as lying with a "small minority" of Bills which give rise to major controversy. The solution it identified, however, would affect all Government Bills taken in Standing Committee and impose timetables on all those thought likely to take more than 25 hours there—this seems an over-reaction.

I believe that the House would be well advised to seek reform of the current practices of timetabling by using the flexibility of our present procedures rather than by recourse to automatic and widespread means of regulating debate.

Above all, it cannot be in the interests of the House to undergo such a profound procedural change which appears to sustain and enhance the ability of the Government to increase the volume and speed of legislation. The genius of this Westminster Parliament is the balance that we strike between law making and the general political debate. The

[Mr. Biffen]

argument for the maintenance of that present balance is not blind conservatism — it is a recognition of legitimate interest of Opposition as well as ministerial law makers.

4.40 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Procedural questions are, as the Leader of the House said, of immense importance, because procedure governs the conduct of our affairs and sets the rules by which we all abide. The right hon. Gentleman has made a far-sighted and a generous speech, on which I congratulate him.

We have before us four reports, three from the last Session and one from this and, in response to them, no fewer than 12 motions on the Order Paper in the name of the Leader of the House. Like the right hon. Gentleman, I shall try to be brief, and I intend to say something first about what I believe to be more generally accepted recommendations, and then to confront, as the right hon. Gentleman did, more contentious questions concerning timetabling of Government Bills, which is the subject of the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir. P. Emery), who is Chairman of the Procedure Committee. That amendment is supported by many other hon. Members.

I start with a warm welcome for the first report, on the operation of Standing Order No. 10. The opening up of the possibilities of debate on a

"specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration"

is one of the monuments to the work of Richard Crossman as Leader of the House 20 years ago. It is an immensely important facility for Back Benchers and, on occasions, it has been used by the Opposition Front Bench as well. It makes the House much more responsive than it would otherwise be to very important events, when the business managers either have not anticipated them, or when they concern matters that the business managers would prefer to play down or ignore.

Requests for debates are not always granted, but to be able to ask for one under Standing Order No. 10 in prime time on the Floor of the House is a welcome, important and valuable opportunity for Back Bench Members. Given all that, we should not cavil at the Committee's recommendations that such speeches should be limited to three minutes. That is long enough for the essential points to be made and I assume, Mr. Speaker, that your response to a wider request under Standing Order No. 10 is considered to be injury time and does not count within the three minutes limit.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop: We are debating "take note" on the first report. What are the right hon. Gentleman's views of paragraph 6, in which the Select Committee recommends that an application for a private notice question should not debar an application under Standing Order No. 10 on the same subject by the same Member?

Mr. Shore: The hon. Gentleman made the same point to the Leader of the House and I shall reply as he did. This matter is not before us at the moment.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: It is.

Mr. Shore: I am speaking about the precise recommendations of the report.

Next is the Select Committee's third report dealing with the treatment of questions lost when a sitting is broken. The Committee's proposal that they should be answered as written questions the following day is entirely sensible. Why the Leader of the House wants to limit this automatic transfer to the following day to written and not oral questions I do not understand. He claimed to find a distinction of purpose between the oral and written question, but there is no clear-cut division between them. Nevertheless it is small stuff and I shall not press it hard.

The Select Committee's fourth report dealt with short speeches and proposed that the experiment begun in the 1984-85 Session whereby you, Mr. Speaker, were empowered to curtail the length of speeches to 10 minutes between certain hours when the House is sitting, should be extended to a further Session. We are a bit late in starting, but I accept the proposal made by the Leader of the House that the 10-minute limitation should operate for the remainder of this Session.

There is then the substantial and very important report of the Select Committee on public Bill procedure. Like the Leader of the House I pay my respects to those who took part in it. It is a serious report which deserves serious consideration. I shall dispose quickly of the recommendations with which I agree before moving on to those from which I dissent. I agree that the Chair, in the face of exceptionally long speeches, should have the power to propose a question during the consideration of the Bill.

I welcome the permanent provision for Special Standing Committees. A Special Standing Committee, combining the Select Committee and Standing Committee procedures, is a valuable innovation, but I hope that it will be used more frequently in the future than it has been in the past few years. I am sorry that the Leader of the House is proposing to restrict the right to propose such procedure to Ministers. The Government have been rather half-hearted about Special Standing Committees. I would like them to be used more frequently, and, if the Opposition and Back Benchers had the same right as Ministers to propose such a procedure, I am sure that their use would be considerably increased.

The central issue raised in today's debate is whether we should accept a profound change in the present rules that govern Bills, and subject, as the Select Committee proposes, all controversial Bills that are likely to take more than 25 hours in Committee to a guillotine from the moment that they have received Second Reading approval. There seem to be only two serious arguments advanced in favour of the change. The first is that it will ensure a more even consideration of all parts of the Bill than is sometimes achieved under present procedures, and the second is that it will spare Members serving on Standing Committees the long hours and tedium of prolonged debate. I do not dismiss these arguments, but they have to be set against each other and against weightier considerations and arguments.

First, the proposals would tilt the balance substantially in favour of the Government of the day. Hon. Members would do well to remind themselves, as the Leader of the House and my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) did in their interventions, that today's Government are tomorrow's Opposition. After all, those of us who are what some would call optimistic and others realistic, and believe that we shall form a Government at the next general election, know that the temptation of

having accelerated procedures are as great for Labour Governments as they are for Conservative Governments. I am speaking not simply as an Opposition spokesman but as one who has spent half of his time as a Member of Parliament as a member of Government. I remember both sides of the argument, and the Leader of the House was far-sighted and generous in the breadth of his remarks and consideration of the different position of a party in opposition and a party in government.

If the Government know, thanks to timetabling, that they will get their Bill by a certain date, that relieves them of a healthy and necessary democratic pressure. As the 1977-78 Select Committee argued, when rejecting a similar proposal, automatic timetabling reduces the pressure on the Government to respond to argument and it greatly reduces the bargaining power of the Opposition in seeking changes and concessions.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is the right hon. Gentleman not exaggerating the amount of pressure on the Government when they have only one difficulty, which is that they have one junior Minister and a number of their Back Benchers tied up in a Committee of which very little notice has been taken by anyone else, in the full knowledge that they will get their timetable after about 80 hours of discussion? What kind of pressure is that?

Mr. Shore: There is quite considerable pressure and I shall come later to the point about where I think the pressure is most effective. The length of time that a Bill will take is unknown when the Bill is embarked upon. A convention may have grown up about moving for a timetable motion at a certain stage, but of course many Bills that are not timetabled go for much longer than the automatic, conventional and customary period of an 80 or 100-hour guillotine.

Mr. Budgen: The right hon. Gentleman said there is usually only a junior Minister in a Standing Committee. That is surely a reflection of the extraordinary balance in this Parliament. When Standing Committees are more evenly balanced it is usual to have a senior Minister there in the knowledge that the pressure will be stronger and that concessions may have to be made to get a Bill through the Standing Committee.

Mr. Shore: The pressures on junior or senior Ministers in Committee depend on the planning of legislation. If two or three Bills are coming from the same Department at the same time, the senior Minister responsible may not be able to take part in Committees on at least one of the Bills for which he is responsible. That is undesirable and requires change in a different area, the area of administration. I was speaking about the disadvantages of what has been proposed, and I should like to quote from the report of the 1977-78 Select Committee on Procedure. Its members summed up their point by saying:

"the Opposition may at present legitimately use their power of delay to cause the Government to consider making concessions in their bills. If time-tabling were general such power would be lost. This would amount to a significant constitutional development, to the detriment of all non-Ministerial Members;"

I take the point made by my hon. Friend whose name has been immortalised in the Rooker-Wise amendment.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): The Rooker-Wise-Lawson amendment.

Mr. Shore: I accept the hon. Gentleman's correction.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Does the right hon. Gentleman remember any occasion in his time when the Government of the day did not get their major legislation through, either because of attrition or because of the guillotine, with the one notable exception on the Floor of the House when there was an unholy but very effective alliance between the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) and the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) on the abolition of the House of Lords? That was a constitutional measure.

Mr. Shore: It is relatively rare, I agree, but the hon. Member for Warwick and Leamington (Sir D. Smith) has quoted one Bill on the Floor of the House. I can think of another one on the Floor of the House, perhaps the most important in my political lifetime, the European Communities Bill, which was won by a whisker, and if it had not been, the whole idea would have been killed at that time.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Does my right hon. Friend remember the devolution Bill? The last Labour Government were not able to impose a guillotine on that and were eventually brought down after the referendum tie. That was the consequence of that.

Mr. Shore: That reflected the balance of forces in that Parliament: that is an important point to bear in mind. It is rare for a Bill to be killed by the process of amendment in debate; I take that point. However, it is often the case that major and minor amendments are secured by the Opposition and on Back Benchers by persisting with their amendments, by demonstrating the strength of their objections to specific proposals, and by consuming the time available for debate. It is this contest between the proponents and the opponents of a Bill that gives life to the legislative process. Few who have served in Committee on a Bill will dispute that the life goes out of the debate a moment a guillotine is imposed. A guillotine Bill is like a Christmas turkey, plucked, trussed, gutted and ready for the oven.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): There is no way that these recommendations will apply to Committee stages on the Floor of the House. The examples quoted by the right hon. Gentleman were examples from the Floor of the House. That will not apply in these recommendations and I am sure the right hon. Gentleman would not wish to mislead the House by suggesting that it will.

Mr. Shore: I said it was rare indeed for a Bill to be killed by the process of Committee stage debate, put it is not rare for a Bill to be amended and changed as a result of pressure at Committee stage. Many Bills are defective and their provisions have painful implications that are exposed only during the course of debate in Committee. These often crucial provisions cannot be anticipated when the Bill goes into Committee. They are revealed only by diligent examination, by probing amendments and by the repeated questioning and cross-questioning of Ministers.

People outside Parliament who are affected by legislation, or who have expertise in the matters covered, need time to marshal their thoughts and to communicate with Government and Opposition. It is important that such people should have the opportunity and the time to do so, not only because they have a genuine contribution to make but because at the end of the day the acceptability of controversial legislation may well be affected by the

[Mr. Shore]

assessment of whether proper opportunities have been given to advance all the opposing arguments, or whether the measure has simply been railroaded through the House on a fixed Government timetable. All that is well understood by hon. Members.

A great majority of highly controversial Bills are fought over, argued out and ultimately resolved, and emerge from Committee without any resort to the guillotine. The guillotine is rarely used. As the appendix to the evidence submitted to the Committee by the learned Clerk shows, in the period from 1946-47 to 1983-84, only 34 Bills in Committee were guillotined. On average, that is slightly less than one a year. Under the Select Committee proposals there would be a vast increase in the number of Bills brought under an automatic guillotine procedure. The guillotine would not be confined, as it was in the post-war period, to exceptionally protracted Bills where little progress is being made. It would be extended to all Bills that are likely to take more than 25 hours in Committee.

The establishment of a Legislative Business Committee, however senior its members—and I have no doubt that senior and responsible hon. Members would be appointed — does not overcome the fact, which the Leader of the House fairly faced, that it would contain a built-in Government majority. The objections to what is proposed, in sum, heavily outweigh the benefits claimed for the changes. I congratulate again the Leader of the House on his resolute refusal to endorse either in his evidence to the Select Committee or in his speech today what is now proposed. The amendment put down by the hon. Member for Honiton would bring a Trojan horse into the matter and I object to that as well as to the substance of the report.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) will accept that towards the end of his speech my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said he accepted that one of the problems facing hon. Members and people outside this House is that, prior to Bills reaching the stage when they are guillotined, they are debated only in part, often a minimal part. My right hon. Friend said he felt that was a justifiable criticism and that something should be done, so that we could fully debate Bills prior to guillotine or Bills that were not to be guillotined to ensure that each clause, or most clauses, were fully considered. That would require the co-operation of the Opposition. If this motion is voted down, will the right hon. Gentleman, on behalf of the Opposition, co-operate with the Leader of the House to see that proper time is given to debate all clauses of Bills that are not fully debated at present?

Mr. Shore: The Opposition's approach to all Bills in Committee is extremely intelligent, well-balanced and carefully thought out, but that does not mean that the Opposition's handling of Bills in Committee could not be improved from time to time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman has gained some satisfaction from those remarks.

Sir William Clark *rose*——

Mr. Shore: I shall not give way again, because I have already given way a great deal.

The timetable proposals are not only unacceptable, they are unnecessary. I have already drawn attention to the few Bills that have been guillotined since the war. Nevertheless, the power of guillotine is there all the time. Governments of both parties have used it and will use it in the future. Indeed, it needs only a three-hour debate for the Government to obtain a timetable motion. I agree with the Leader of the House that the appropriate time that should elapse before the Government seek a timetable motion should not be decided by applying arbitrary or conventional formulae, but should be decided on the merits of each case.

With the Leader of the House, I believe that we are better served by our present procedures than we would be by those proposed in the Select Committee report and the amendment. I advise the House to reject them.

5 pm

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I thank the members of the Procedure Committee who, during the past two Sessions, have spent many arduous hours working quietly behind the scenes to no political advantage. I also thank the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who was a member of the Committee for part of the time. The Committee tries to ensure some modernisation of the proceedings of the House.

The most important part of the debate relates to Committee proceedings on public Bills, and I remind the House that it specifically asked my Committee to consider that matter and make recommendations on it. From some of the remarks by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), it would appear that they have experience of very different Committees from the ones on which I have served during the past 25 years. The Procedure Committee wishes to overcome the more archaic procedural nonsense of the House and drag it into the 20th century. At the same time, it wishes to overcome some of the restrictive practices or procedural madnesses that surround the present timetabling of Bills, which are apparently retained only for a purely party political fandango.

What normal person could believe that it makes sense to retain a procedure that condemns Members of Parliament considering the most controversial legislation to waste 80 or 100 hours on the first three, four or five clauses of a Bill so that a timetable can be forced on the Government—a procedure which, when applied, means that 30, 40 or sometimes 100 clauses of major Bills go to the House of Lords almost without any consideration by the Committee? Who, other than someone soft in the head, could believe that, in this day and age, it makes sense for serious amendments to major legislation to be considered after a full working day by a Committee sitting at 2 am or 3 am, and sometimes even at 7 am or 8 am? People outside the House think that we are mad.

May I refer to some of the less contentious recommendations of the Committee. I am pleased that the Government welcome our recommendation to include Special Standing Committees permanently in the Standing Orders. With the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, I hope that that procedure will be used much more than it has been. Every Minister who gave evidence to the Committee and who was in charge of a Bill that went to a Special Standing Committee suggested that it greatly helped his handling of the Bill. The only other amendment tabled by the Committee would extend the right to request

Special Standing Committee procedures to the Opposition Front Bench and other Members of the House. It should not be reserved to Ministers.

It may have escaped hon. Members' notice that the Committee's recommendation would mean that the motion is not debatable. The Committee has tried to balance matters so that the Government do not lose time. Instead of having a debatable motion, the question should be put forthwith, but we have suggested that hon. Members other than Ministers should be allowed to propose it.

The closure in Committee is to be known as the "Golding gallop" after a loophole found by the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding). I hope that I can congratulate the hon. Gentleman later today on having won a position of importance in his trade union. He will be missed by the Committee, and I hope that this will not be his swansong.

As to written or oral questions lost, one point was not raised by the Committee, but was made by the Government. One reason for not accepting that an oral question should automatically become a written question would be that the hon. Member would be debarred for six months from tabling that question for oral answer. He may not wish to do that, but he may be unable to withdraw the question because the House is not sitting. It might be better to allow the Government's suggestion to go forward, but I have no major views on that. The recommendation on Standing Order No. 10 applications must be an improvement.

The main procedural amendment has been signed by more than 150 right hon. and hon. Members. It is wrong to say, as the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) did, that the vast majority of them were elected in the previous two elections. The list includes a former Opposition Chief Whip, who was elected a long time ago. It also includes right hon. and hon. Members who have been in the House for a long time. That comment was not up to the hon. Gentleman's usual standard of intervention. It is interesting to note that support for the amendment comes from both sides of the House, from former Whips, former Ministers—Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all.

Mr. Rooker: How many of those who signed the amendment have been in the position of being a Government Back-Bench Member seriously fighting his Government and using the time available? The list might be full of former Whips, but how many of those people ever rebelled against their Government? How many of them will vote for an amendment that would stop that happening in the future?

Sir Peter Emery: I do not understand how that can be relevant to the general recommendation. I am surprised that the Government have not mentioned one of the dangers to them. When there is a guillotine motion in the offing the chances of getting Back-Bench Government Members to side with the Opposition, in the nonsense debates beforehand, is very slight. The chances of getting Government Members to side with Opposition Members against the Government are much higher in a moderate and sensible debate without the high political structure of a guillotine.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): More often than not, Ministers get an inkling that there might be a revolt on their own side, and the temptation to encourage ultra-loyal Members on their own side to take up time on less controversial bids can well ensure that the key bids, where there might be cross-over voting, are never reached and that debate does not take place.

Sir Peter Emery: The Committee considered that and made recommendations to ensure that all parts of the Bill are considered. I, like many others, have taken Bills through Committee. Of course one attempts to look to one's loyal supporters—only a fool would not. I am under no misapprehension that it is much more difficult to get hon. Members to co-operate if there is a calm structure in the Committee than if there is a high political tone against the Opposition.

Sir William Clark: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Peter Emery: Certainly, but I am trying to keep to a 10-minute speech.

Sir William Clark: Will my hon. Friend consider the Finance Bill which comes up each year? For example, Government Back Benchers might table amendments to clause 60, and clauses 50 to 60 might be grouped together in the timetable. If the Opposition do not like the Back-Bench Tory Government amendments to clause 60, they could be talked out, or rather not reached. How do we overcome that? From my experience of serving on many Finance Bills, if every clause is considered, despite the fact that one is under a guillotine, every clause is debated and each Back Bencher, Government or Opposition, has the opportunity to move an amendment.

Sir Peter Emery: I do not disagree with my hon. Friend's last contention, but I do accept that the Legislative Business Committee, of which he might be a member, should have to analyse the normal proceedings in Finance Bills for many years to make sensible conclusions about the length of time that is required.

However—of I think this is the only exception to what the Committee says—if the Finance Bill is a special case, as it used to be because it was debated entirely on the Floor of the House, it would be exempted, from that procedure. It does not have to be exempted but that is a major possibility.

The approach to legislation of the Procedure Committee, of the Government and of the Opposition, obviously start from entirely different points of view. The Government have to ensure that their necessary and excellent legislation is obtained as expeditiously and quickly as possible. The Opposition have the right to examine, harry, oppose and delay legislation whenever they wish. The Procedure Committee takes the view that, once the principle of legislation is agreed on Second Reading, the House has a duty, which the country expects it to fulfil, to ensure that Committees will examine the Bill reasonably and fully to ensure that the legislation makes sense and is not full of nonsenses that will require correction by further legislation. The House should also consider representations from those affected and improve the Bill wherever necessary. The objectives of Opposition and Government need not be in conflict with the approach of the Procedure Committee, and I believe that our recommendations are not in conflict with their objectives.

I shall explain the workings of our recommendation because there is massive misunderstanding of it. Even on the BBC today, having had the matter explained, it was suggested that the Procedure Committee was trying to limit time on all Committees to 25 hours. That is absolute

[Sir Peter Emery]

nonsense. There is some misunderstanding on both Front Benches. The flexibility remains. The suggestion that it does not is unfair and unworthy. After Second Reading, every Government Bill will be considered by the Committee.

It is thought that certain action should follow after 25 hours. If there is any weakness in the proposal, it is that 25 hours is too little. Perhaps it ought to be 30 or 35 hours. However, the Committee recommended 25. The principle is the same. There can be prolonged debate in Committee on Bills which everyone knows will be guillotined. We should not pretend that there is marvellous argument and consideration of every amendment for 80 or 90 hours before the guillotine is brought in. That is not living in the real world and it is unworthy of the Front Bench to suggest that it is.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that, when they go into Standing Committees, the public see not reasonable debate but hon. Members, especially on the Government side, answering their mail and doing other work? Does my hon. Friend agree that, although that may be very worthy, it is not good for the reputation of Parliament?

Sir Peter Emery: I agree. That has been the case for many years. The operation of the recommendation would allow some flexibility. If, when the set hours are reached, any new matter has arisen in Committee, it would be possible to go back to the Legislative Business Committee for an extension, if one is thought necessary.

Sir Kenneth Lewis: If a Bill has not been guillotined, but it has been examined by that Committee, the Government are frustrated because other Bills are being guillotined and turn the heat on the Bill, can they apply for a guillotine?

Sir Peter Emery: Yes. I shall explain how later. The House—through the voice of a Committee of senior Back Bench Members—not the Government will decide that the most contentious and controversial Bills, which everyone knows that the Government will duly guillotine, will be timetabled from the start of their Committee stage. The new procedure would be used, rather than our having to waste the 100-odd hours on a few clauses until the guillotine is introduced.

A shibboleth that has been adopted by both major parties—that time is power and delaying legislation in Committee wreaks havoc on the Government or stops legislation getting through—is no longer true, if it ever was. The only havoc created is for the poor hon. Members who have to go through the party political charade of wasting time and sitting through all hours of the day and night.

As to stopping legislation, the Clerk of the House can find no instance in the last 20 years where delay in Committee upstairs has meant that the Government have lost a Bill they wished to have on the statute book. That is the major point, because there is not the flexibility that the Opposition say there is. Nor is there any case of delay in one Bill stopping other Bills listed in the Queen's Speech being enacted. There is no proof of that. Everybody knows that when a Bill goes into Committee the Government Whips office has a date by which the Bill has to be out from Committee in order to go into the House of Lords. If the Opposition use all that time, in comes the guillotine. Why, therefore, try to suggest that there is any flexibility for the Opposition?

Mr. A. F. Bennett: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that in the case of the Wildlife and Countryside Bill and the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, very substantial Bills on which the Government were keen not to introduce the guillotine, substantial alterations were made during their passage which the Opposition, I am sure, could claim improved the Bills, and that a lot of that improvement would not have been possible if right from the start there had been a rigid timetable?

Sir Peter Emery: The hon. Member can argue that quite fairly. What I would counter-argue is that I believe that, with the proper consideration of the Legislative Business Committee, appropriate time would have been given. There is just as much right in that being the case as in the point put forward by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyne) *rose*—

Sir Dudley Smith: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. No Bill can be stopped in the House if it has the Government's backing unless it is objected to on the Floor of the House. Even that has to be done with the connivance of Government Back Benchers. If it is upstairs, it must get through its stage, however long it may take.

Sir Peter Emery: My hon. Friend is obviously right.

Two other suggestions have been made, which have to be considered. One is that we are limiting the power of Government to ensure that they obtain their legislation. This is not so, because the Government—this answers the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham)—by Standing Order No. 46 will still have the power to introduce their own guillotine motion, as they do at present, if they are dissatisfied with the decision on timing. What will have been achieved, however, is that the Legislative Business Committee will have stated quite clearly the time which it considers is necessary to consider a Bill. Therefore, if the Government wish to alter that decision, I believe there will be somewhat more ire than at present with the proposal to timetable. Only in this instance could there be said to be a limitation on the Government's freewheeling in obtaining their legislation.

Secondly, it is claimed that the power of the Opposition is limited. Again I dispute this. As I have clearly said, delay in Committee upstairs does not stop Government legislation; nor in recent history have there been any Government concessions forced because of delay—forced because of argument, forced because of reason, but not forced necessarily because of delay.

What our new proposals do is to give the Opposition considerable power from the start of contentious Bills—a major say in how the time in Committee upstairs will be allocated. Hon. Members who have experience of these matters will know that in a business Sub-Committee of a Bill, which is the way that time would be allocated, the Government will nearly always heed the wishes of the Opposition. In order that minority parties are not left out, we have increased the numbers who shall serve on those business Sub-Committees.

Finally, on the recommendations, the Procedure Committee believes that if these recommendations are

worked properly there will be no need for Committees to have to sit all night. Therefore, a 10 o'clock time for rising of Standing Committees is recommended. One Opposition Member proposed that it might be at the rising of the House. One can understand that, but one is attempting to get a set hour for rising.

This is an integral part of the overall recommendation. The Government, once they know the number of hours allocated to a Committee, should not be allowed to crash through their legislation by making a Committee use up a specified time with all-night sittings or unreasonable sittings motions.

Another major matter needs consideration. If a Bill is to be timetabled, the Government must come to the House to obtain permission. This is thought by tradition to be of great importance. There is no doubt that 20 years ago a guillotine motion created considerable hubbub and anger in the House and for a while raised political temperatures outside the House. I look back to the guillotine of the Transport Bill under Mr. Crossman. The debate on the guillotine itself ran to 5 am before the Division was taken. After the guillotine, two months of extra time had to be given. I know, because I took part in that demonstration.

That does not apply today. On the last guillotine motion, announced in business questions only three weeks ago, there was not one question or voice of anger against it being introduced. I have to point out that, when the Leader of the Opposition got up on this major matter, only eight Members were sitting behind him with their wrath and their fury. That really is nonsense. We are trying to save time on the Floor of the House, and we could certainly save two or three days by cutting out those aspects of legislation.

In closing—I apologise to the House for having been so long—I thank the Leader of the House for his kind remarks about the Committee and for accepting a large number of our recommendations. He has also shown the greatest kindness and willingness to meet and help the Committee, although I could not for one moment suggest that the Leader of the House was the shining spearhead of innovative reform. I am sorry to have to cross swords with him on this main recommendation concerning timetabling motions. Rather I would plead that his massive intellectual strength must suggest to him that a one-year experiment cannot be other than reasonable. Surely if we do not try to see by experiment and test whether more sensible measures will work in the procedure of the House, we condemn the procedure of the House to continue to live in the 19th century. That is not what the Procedure Committee recommends. I therefore ask both sides of the House to give their support to the Procedure Committee so that we can carry forward the necessary experiment for 12 months.

5.28 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau, Gwent): The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) has naturally defended the recommendations of his Committee with great skill and determination, as we would expect of him, and of course the House owes a great deal to those who spent so much time, as he and others have done, in making these recommendations and in doing their work so thoroughly. Therefore, in criticising what he proposes, I in no way wish to criticise him or the way in which he has made the recommendations.

I was not properly present when the resolution was passed limiting speeches to 10 minutes. If I had been, I would have voted against it. I have never believed such a limitation to be of service to Back Benchers. It may assist the Government in enabling business to be conducted in a most orderly manner, but on many occasions 10 minutes may be an inadequate time for a Back-Bench Member, in particular, to put his case. The hon. Member for Honiton gave an illustration of it. Indeed, he took over the 10 minutes that he is recommending.

If Aneurin Bevan or Winston Churchill had been limited to 10 minutes when they sat on the Back Benches, the Front Bench would have profited from it. That is why these factors have to be taken into account. Recommendations which supposedly are in the interests of Back Benchers very often have the opposite effect when they are applied in practice.

I agree with every word of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore). He put the case overwhelmingly. He was assisted by the remarkable speech of the Leader of the House. The House has been very well served by the right hon. Gentleman. Nobody has been better served than the Government. They would have been in an appalling shambles week after week had it not been for the Leader of the House. I know that the praise that I offer him does him damage in the highest quarters. None the less, I must continue to do it in the interests of truth.

The right hon. Gentleman has made a remarkable contribution to this Parliament. Week after week the Government have been in a state of chaos and shambles. They have not known which way to turn. However, along comes the right hon. Gentleman each Thursday and suggests that everything is orderly and fine. If any controversial question is raised, he does not quite hear what is said. If my right hon. and hon. Friends ask questions about Bates' colliery, he cannot quite hear them. But he has been admirable. As I have watched the right hon. Gentleman, I have been reminded of the occasions when in my youth——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foot: No, not for the moment.

I am reminded of the occasions when in my youth I went to see the films of Buster Keaton. He was my favourite actor. Week after week he was landed in the most appalling difficulties and faced the most appalling shambles. He was in car crashes and train crashes and was caught up in all kinds of difficulties. However, week after week he batted not an eyelid for a moment. He assured everybody that everything in the garden was splendid. So the right hon. Gentleman is the Buster Keaton of the House.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Is not the right hon. Gentleman proving the point for 10-minute speeches? When time is short in a serious debate, the 10 minutes rule concentrates speeches upon the matter under discussion.

Mr. Foot: It may concentrate speeches, but it may also invite hon. Members not to give way. Indeed, that happens on many occasions. When the 10-minute limit is imposed it is very rare for hon. Members to give way.

I am seeking to compliment the right hon. Gentleman upon his presentation of these matters to the House. He has

[Mr. Foot]

protected the Government from one disaster after another. It is upon his shoulders that week after week the Government have depended. All the more, therefore, should we pay attention to what he says today. I am not sure whether the right hon. Gentleman would discuss these matters in the legislative business committee or in the Cabinet, but if he said that they ought to grab this report and run because it is of immediate advantage to the Government, I am sure that he would carry the day.

The House of Commons owes a great debt of gratitude to the Leader of the House for his speech. It protects the position not only of the present Government but of future Governments and future Oppositions. I commend especially strongly his rejection of an experiment for one year. We know what happens to experiments for one year. They can be there 10, 15 or 20 years later, thus still riveting the original imposition on the House of Commons. I hope that the House will not think that if it decides to look again at this matter in 12 months' time there is no need to worry about it.

Both the Government and the Opposition Front Benches recognise that if the Government had a more orderly timetable ahead of them for 12 months, or for two or three Sessions, and knew that they would be able to get through nearly all of their legislation without any infringement, upsets or difficulties—timetable motions would contribute to that knowledge—they would have to pay much less attention to the House of Commons, to Back Benchers on both sides of the House and to the campaigns that are mobilised outside the House of Commons to bring pressure to bear upon hon. Members. A Government that had available to them all that power would be tempted to be even more dictatorial than Governments are tempted to be now.

One of the main reasons for the Government having been tempted to be so dictatorial during the past two or three years, especially in recent months, is the danger that was described by the right hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Pym) after the general election: that the Government had such a huge majority. The Government have not, therefore, been too worried. It was only when certain Conservative Members joined Opposition Members that the Government were brought to their senses, or at least were brought nearer to their senses, on many of these matters. The House of Commons then began to re-establish some of its control over the Executive. If the Government were sure at the beginning of a Session that the Standing Committee procedure was to be cut and dried and that there would be very few upsets, their position facing the House of Commons would be enormously strengthened, but it would do injury to Parliament.

There have been other developments which, far from necessarily assisting the power of the House of Commons, have in my opinion injured it. Many of these developments have injured the authority of this Chamber and the way in which it can be exerted. We have to guard against any such infringements and dangers. The Leader of the House, supported by my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney, has ensured on this occasion that we shall not depart from the proper protection of the right of the House of Commons to criticise the Executive, to choose the time at which to do it and not to have that time dictated to it by the Government.

5.37 pm

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I see that I must address my remarks to Buster Keaton. My right hon. Friend has got into a mess, but he will find it very difficult to get out of. I support the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). In this short debate I see no point in rehearsing the arguments that were considered so extensively by the Select Committee on Procedure. I congratulate the Committee upon its work.

I am a vice-chairman of the all-party House of Commons reform group, where I sit under the chairmanship of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), who has had to leave the Chamber. It is no secret —it is in our evidence to the Select Committee—that we wished to go much further than the Select Committee has gone. We wanted to entrench the 10 o'clock rule. We wanted also to have fixed Sessions of Parliament to achieve a better balance vis-à-vis the Executive. However, it is abundantly clear from the circular that we sent to all right hon. and hon. Members that the vast majority of Back Benchers accept and support the generality of the Select Committee's recommendations.

This is a House of Commons day, a Back-Bench Members' day. If this amendment is lost, I make so bold as to say that we shall not see reforms of this nature for many a long day. What a farce it is that this first hesitant step towards a more sensible arrangement has brought down on itself the full force of Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's loyal Opposition.

Yet even in my relatively short time in the House, as my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton said, a guillotine has passed from being a major parliamentary occasion to being absolutely an inevitable, boring routine, with predictable speeches from hon. Members on both sides of the House.

We all know that the present arrangements——

Mr. Budgen: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Benyon: I cannot give way; many hon. Members wish to speak. I normally do so, but I cannot on this occasion.

The present arrangements are a stupid way to consider legislation in Committee. There is no doubt about that in the minds of most of my hon. Friends. We all know the pattern of delays in the early stages, followed by the inevitable guillotine and eventual Royal Assent. The so-called delaying power about which we have heard so much this afternoon is illusory. I have sat on Committees dealing with the type of Bills that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was talking about. Votes stop legislation.

Anyway, who is to say that the Legislative Business Committee will not fix a much longer Committee stage than that which takes place, normally, after the guillotine is brought in? Who is to say that a future Leader of the House will not take up the point made at the end of the speech of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and bring in a shorter guillotine at an earlier time? What my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has suggested about bringing in timetable motions before the 80 hours have elapsed is precisely what could happen. The amendment is protection for the House.

The real reason why the idea has produced such a reaction is the increasing contempt in which Governments of both parties have progressively regarded the House of

Commons. The idea that the House of Commons should take to itself even the smallest measure of what is carried out through the usual channels sends shivers down a lot of spines. That is why the vote tonight is so important.

If the amendment is lost, we shall stagger on with a procedure that is both antiquated and discredited. The Select Committee will realise that its only role in future will be to consider trivia. Parliament will suffer, because the people will realise that any reform, no matter how modest or tentative, will not stand a chance of success against the entrenched and ever more powerful Executive. Let us try this modest reform for the short period of one year, and see what happens. I would have preferred something more dramatic and extensive, but, like Cardinal Newman in his famous hymn,

> "I do not ask to see the distant scene,
> One step enough for me".

5.42 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As the first member of the Committee to speak after the Chairman, I pay tribute to him. The hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) is a hard but courteous taskmaster, as the number of our reports demonstrates. I pay tribute to the way in which he runs our affairs.

One controversial recommendation of the Select Committee relates to short speeches. The Committee took the view that the 10-minute experiment should be repeated, but acknowledged that its effects have been relatively small. A price must be paid for the small benefit of perhaps one or two more Members being called in a debate. I know that some of my hon. Friends are not happy about the experiment continuing. The rule leads hon. Members to say that they are unwilling to give way. That even extends beyond the time in which the rule is in operation, because it becomes an excuse for Ministers speaking early in the debate to claim pressure of time.

I believe that Ministers should give way often. A long speech from a Minister subjected to many interventions is a service to the House if it enables points to be explored in detail. The Committee's report states:

> "We have no doubt that Mr. Speaker will take into account the importance of his being able to call the spokesmen of parties other than the Official Opposition . . . before the rule comes into operation."

I mention that because it has been a difficulty. If the Minister speaks for an hour, the Opposition Front Bench speech lasts three quarters of an hour and our spokesman is confined to 10 minutes, he will have no chance to cover the range of matters to which arguments have been addressed by others. I am grateful to the Committee for placing that proviso on the record, although it will remain a controversial point.

I am glad that the Leader of the House has accepted the recommendation on Special Standing Committees. The evidence of the Solicitor-General especially struck me during the proceedings. He has a way of committing interesting things to paper, some of which are not intended for publication. On that occasion, he discussed the Criminal Attempts Act 1981. He stated:

> "I had the salutary experience of cross-examining two of the leading authorities on criminal law . . . as to the likely effect of a Bill about whose provisions I was already experiencing a sinking feeling . . .
>
> At the end of the final sitting of the special standing committee the draftsman informed me that not only did the Bill not do what it was supposed to do but that it could not be made to do it.
>
> It is unnecessary to relate here the unorthodox and urgent steps that were then taken to recast that part of the Bill in time for the resulting vast array of amendments to be on the paper when the ordinary standing committee first met the following week. The point is that, it was better that those defects became apparent before the ordinary standing committee began its examination of the Bill . . . I gratefully recognised this at the time and have never forgotten it."

That is testimony to the value of the Special Standing Committee procedure.

I welcome the ingenious solution to the problem of the long opening speech in Committee—the power of the Chair to propose the Question—which is much better than the alternative of curtailing the debate on the amendment being moved.

I welcome the fact that we are getting rid of the Third Reading blocking motion, which is an interesting illustration of how procedures can be devised which the House does not follow. It has become automatic practice to table Third Reading blocking motions to the extent that parties fall over each other to table them. The House should have the opportunity to decide whether it wishes to debate a Bill on Third Reading and that would be the effect of removing the blocking motion.

I welcome the recommendation to limit Standing Order No. 10 applications to three minutes. I agree with the point that the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) raised in several interventions. An hon. Member who has applied for a private notice question should not, in my humble submission, be told by the Chair that he should not make a Standing Order No. 10 application out of the question. By putting in a private notice question application he is creating the chance that his arguments will get a reply. That does not happen with a Standing Order No. 10 application unless a debate is granted. The hon. Member who fairly says privately to the Chair that if possible he would like to ask a private notice question so that others can join in and an answer can be given should not be told that if that is not granted he cannot make a Standing Order No. 10 application. The hon. Member who takes the fair route first should not be disadvantaged.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will prevail upon his hon. Friends to forbear from putting down Standing Order No. 10 applications on occasions when we have radio broadcasts of debates straight from the Chamber.

Mr. Beith: Certainly not; it is an appropriate time to do it. If the Chair were not occupied by Mr. Speaker and if he were free to take part in the debate, I am sure that he could tell us in some detail how large numbers of Standing Order No. 10 applications were tabled at the time of the Labour Government when the winter of discontent and many strikes and disputes were taking place. There are some time-honoured procedures by which hon. Members can bring grievances to light.

The Select Committee raised the fundamental question of the timetable of Bills. I was especially struck by the statement of the Leader of the House that the proposals might disturb the way in which Governments and Oppositions go about their business in the House. There is an air that traditional ways of doing things might be disturbed, but that is right and intended. I do not need to dwell on the arguments about how absurd the present arangements are. At one time the fear of having to bring forward a timetable motion might have been enough of a threat to Governments to encourage them to make

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concessions, but I cannot believe that that is so now. The right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) has demonstrated that fact vividly. He introduced five in one day. Since that time, any modest timetable motion introduced by a Government has been as uncontroversial as a spring morning. I do not know how the right hon. Gentleman can claim that the Committee is disturbing the established rights of Back Benchers when he found an easier and briefer way of doing so — five timetable motions in one day.

The House is being asked to consider a much more elaborate procedure to enable hon. Members, especially Back Benchers, to play a part in the orderly consideration of Government Bills. As I suggested in an intervention, I do not think that having a Committee tied up for 80 hours imposes a great burden on the Government. Having a junior Minister and a number of Back Benchers dragooned into sitting in Committee does not place a tremendous pressure on the Government.

None of that applies to Bills taken on the Floor of the House. None of these recommendations applies to Bills taken on the Floor of the House. The power of delay on the Floor of the House is effective. That is why hon. Members are so jealous of the right to keep Bills on the Floor of the House when they concern constitutional matters. That does not apply to the limited number of hon. Members who are tied up in Committee.

I attach importance to the proposed Legislative Business Committee being a body wider than the usual channels. Hon. Members should not be led astray by the suggestion that such a body should not be created because they are already well represented under existing arrangements. They have been told, "Do not worry. The Whips will look after your interests. It is undesirable that you should be represented on some larger body which will be involved in these matters." Back Benchers should reject that argument quickly.

The House is asked to sanction an experiment to consider in an orderly way how time might be used in discussing Bills, which we know will eventually have time restrictions imposed on them, and to consider ways in which the process of deciding on that time can involve more hon. Members than at present.

The Leader of the House offered hon. Members an interesting alternative. He suggested that, rather than vote for these proposals, hon. Members should note that he had been seriously influenced by all that had been said about the defects of the present procedure and that he would consider, perhaps with the assistance of his counterpart on the Opposition Front Bench, whether something could be done through the usual channels. The right hon. Gentleman could gain an attractive uncovenanted bonus from today's proceedings. He has only to bring forward timetable motions much earlier, taking into account the feelings expressed in the House this afternoon, without providing any of the safeguards that the Select Committee on Procedure sought to provide and without ensuring that there is a Legislative Business Committee and certain procedures concerning the time to be allocated.

I say to hon. Members, do not fall for that one. If the amendment of the hon. Member for Honiton is defeated, I fear that the Leader of the House will go away and say, "Now I have the sanction for which I am looking to bring forward timetable motions much earlier. Clearly, this 80-hour business has become outdated." The Government will have gained a great deal, but Back Benchers generally and the Opposition will not.

That is why the Select Committee on Procedure put forward a whole package and asked the House to accept that package as a whole. It will not be enormously to the advantage of Governments. There are some advantages for Government and some for Back Benchers in it. It is a reasonable overall package. If we do not accept the recommendations, we shall continue with the absurdity of many hours being spent on a few clauses of a Bill and the rest of the Bill being gabbled through, with numbers read out as the guillotine falls—a procedure that is an insult to the people who have to carry out the legislation and those who have to live with it and its consequences. That is unreasonable. Either we shall have that or we shall have much earlier timetable motions, with all the disadvantages of the present procedures and none of the safeguards which the Committee sought to give. I therefore invite the House to support the sensible proposal of the Select Committee on Procedure.

5.53 pm

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I have always felt instinctively inclined to support the recommendations of the Select Committee on Procedure, but the statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes (Mr. Benyon) that the all-party House of Commons reform group supported the recommendations made me wonder whether the Select Committee's recommendations were correct after all. I have never yet found anything produced by the reform group with which I could agree.

Mr. Benyon: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Farr: I shall not give way. I do not have time.

On reflection, my initial instinct, which was to support my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), has been tempered. I support the view of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that the report should be noted.

I have had experience of introducing private Members' Bills which have been tied down in Committee by Governments. I am particularly worried about the proposals of the Select Committee on Procedure, because the Committee seems to assume that, for almost as far ahead as one can perceive, we shall have a party in power with a large majority — in this case a Conservative majority.

I well remember in years gone by the value of existing checks and barriers to prevent legislation from going forward. The Select Committee is seeking to change those barriers in respect of Government Bills. In past years, as an Opposition Back Bencher, I rejoiced at the existence of these checks. They made life difficult for those Governments—whatever the political party—who have not sufficiently respected the Opposition and have found life too easy.

If the Select Committee's recommendations on Government business are accepted and life for Government measures is made easier, sooner or later, as surely as day follows night, that will be translated into action on private Members' measures, and we will then be in a real chamber of horrors. In recent years a succession of private Members' Bills have been introduced which have been kept under control and at bay by existing

barriers. Any relaxation of the present system will make life easier for some of the extremists, giving them more time, and make it easier for some extreme measures to be passed. The present structure and system have stood the test of time in keeping those measures out.

I welcome the suggestion on the 10-minutes rule for speeches. We must remember that this is the first Parliament with a large number of extra Members. There are now 650 Members of Parliament. This places extra pressure on the Chair from Back Benchers wishing to make speeches. I am glad that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House welcomes this proposal.

I fully support my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who has grave reservations about the recommendations of the Select Committee. I shall join him in the Lobby in voting against the change.

5.58 pm

Mr. John Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I want to talk, first, about the Government amendment to curb exceptionally long speeches. I was hurt to hear the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) suggest that the measure was prompted by my 11¼-hour speech, which has gone into the "Guinness Book of Records" and has been celebrated in cartoon by P. C. Nuttall. I do not regard an 11¼-hour speech as exceptionally long. Be that as it may, the speech was serious, coherent and in order; in other words, it was quite out of the ordinary.

Why has that speech aroused so much antagonism? There are two reasons: first, on that occasion, I actually knew what I was talking about; secondly, from time to time, it contained the occasional joke. When I first came into the House it was considered binding on Members making long speeches that at least they be entertaining. That convention seems to have disappeared. Now we have what is called the turgid fashion. I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) referring in the Tea Room—I should not repeat this—to one of the present exponents as "Golding without the jokes". I cannot add any more to this, because it is sub judice and substantial damages are expected.

If exceptionally long speeches are to be avoided in the future I shall feel sorry, in one way, for certain Members. After I made my 11¼-hour speech, I was rung up by correspondents from periodicals and newspapers all over the world. They were not political correspondents, but rather the editors of women's journals asking the reason for the stamina that was shown. That was the interest shown in the speech. That did not apply to my own wife. I returned to my constituency on the following Saturday and was shocked at the headline, which read: "MP's wife says he goes on a bit." That was the total impact of that 11¼-hour speech.

I shall support the Government in their attempt to stop exceptionally long speeches. Today I was elected general secretary of the National Communications Union, and I shall be leaving the House. To keep my record I need the support of Members this evening. It is not only my pride that is at stake. Filibustering, if it is to be called that, is a painful business and should be brought to an end. I disagree with many of my hon. Friends on this point.

I am not talking about the pain to the Chairman—I still get into trouble with my wife because I keep on saying "Miss Fookes" in my sleep. I am not talking about Ministers—the hon. Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher) the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, still bears the scars on his face. I am not referring to the ladies of the Tea Room—at 4 o'clock in the morning their general response to Members like me is "Do you not have a so-and-so home to go to?" Nor am I referring to the Doorkeepers and policemen who look rather bleary eyed at those of us who are keeping them up. No, I am not speaking in their defence. They have said too many hard things about me in the past, and I shall not jump to their defence.

I am referring to those who are asked by the Whips to talk for an exceptional length. Most Members will not know the horror of being pushed in to the Chamber and told that one has to speak at length—the Whips may have said that one must speak for two hours—and to speak wisely, without knowing what the amendment is about. The terror of wondering whether one will be given the Amendment Paper open at the right page so that one may begin one's speech is unknown to many hon. Members. No one knows the terror of clashing with the Chairman who has a 9 o'clock plane to catch to Glasgow. Nobody knows the dull ache in the legs, which are weaker than the tongue, or the realisation that nature calls.

To speak for an exceptional length of time is sometimes a difficult task. I regard it as equivalent to the young lieutenants of the first world war who were charged with the job of leading the charge from the trenches. They did not want to do it, but did so because it was expected of them, and they did it for England. No one speaks at exceptional length out of choice. Hon. Members do it out of a duty imposed on them. They would like to be relieved of that duty, and the proposal of the hon. Member for Honiton would relieve them of that obligation.

I also support timetabling, not only out of sympathy for those who are called upon to hold up business, but because it is opposed by the Prime Minister. Although it has not been mentioned, I understand that Ministers have been summoned from all parts of the world to be here this evening to vote against this proposal. Why have they been sent for? The Prime Minister does not dislike or oppose exceptionally long speeches—she never actually listens. To the Prime Minister, an exceptionally long speech is something about which she may be told in idle conversation. The Prime Minister wants to defeat this proposition because she knows that her days are numbered. The Prime Minister knows that we will have a Labour Government. She has given up governing and has adopted an Opposition mentality. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to give up their Opposition mentality, for they will be in government.

I shall not be here, Mr. Speaker, but I constantly think of your needs. A Labour Government need timetabling, and everyone on the Opposition Benches who supports Labour should support the motion. I disagree with the hon. Member for Honiton. If Labour had won the last election, the Telecommunications Bill would have been dead, because we fought it and spoke against it at length. We held it up in Committee. That Bill would have gone, because we opposed it.

When I have left the House and I am sitting in the union offices, I do not want to read that Conservative Members have the same facility to stop putting British Telecom back into public ownership. There is only one way in which a Labour Government will be able to do what they want to do, and that is to prevent the time wasting that the present situation permits. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr will take a different view, but when he is sitting here

[Mr. John Golding]

as a senior Minister and young slips of lads from the Conservative party are keeping him up all night he will change his mind.

Mr. Rooker: I agree with my hon. Friend that we shall have a Labour Government, but it will be a Labour Government who truly believe in the supremacy of Parliament. That is the point. The present Government ignore Parliament and ride roughshod over the House of Commons. It is on this that I and my hon. Friend divide.

Mr. Foot: Quite right.

Mr. Golding: My right hon. Friend of the five guillotine motions supports my hon. Friend's view of the supremacy of Parliament.

I have reservations and I have placed them down as amendments. It is a relief to me that they were not called, because Members would have had to vote on them at 7 o'clock on a Thursday and that would have made me very unpopular. The usual channels must not be undermined. I think too little praise has been bestowed on this excellent system. This House depends on conflicts, and our democracy depends upon conflict in the House. The Government depend upon that conflict being kept within bounds. The one thing that the usual channels do is to ensure constantly that the system works.

I want the system to continue to work. Any new Committee system must take into account the fact that the usual channels will have to negotiate over wide areas of business. I should not like to see the usual channels thrust aside by the Procedure Committee.

If we must have timetabling, we must also deal with the question of how much time Government supporters should take up, because it is not just Government supporters who oppose the Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr is the exception. Most of us are elected under a party label to support the party.

Mr. Rooker: That is what I was doing.

Mr. Golding: That is what most of us do. Most of us are loyal to our parties and loyal to the promise that we made to our electorate to support the party. If I were the Secretary of State on a Committee that was timetabled, my first thought would be to find a young man who wanted to make his name and who was prepared to talk and talk and talk in support of the Government, thereby squeezing out Opposition speeches of criticism. We must solve that problem. It can be solved only by agreements that are kept and worked out through the usual channels. If that is not done, the proposal is a charter for the Government-lackey filibuster and our democracy would be the worse for it.

I have tabled an amendment which has not been selected. It says, "Get rid of the 10 o'clock rule and relate the ending of the Committee to the rising of the House." The 10 o'clock rule is nonsense in practice. If the House sits late on a Tuesday, what sense is there in saying to hon. Members, "Finish in Committee and go and hang around the Tea Rooms until the early hours"? They will say that they might as well be in Committee. Everyone knows that Members would prefer to work late on Tuesdays and finish early on Thursdays.

Shop stewards are required in the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) was called the shop steward. We have missed his services since he became a distinguished journalist. If the 10 o'clock rule is abolished, we must find a device which prevents the Government from using up all the hours in one fell swoop and getting the legislation through quickly.

A Bill needs a certain length of time in Committee, because outside interests which want to make representations need a little time to wake up to what is happening in Parliament. We need a rule related to the rising of the House, and a limited number of weeks for the Opposition and for Government supporters who want to support or oppose the Government.

I was asked by many hon. Members to spin out my speech because they do not like the proposals, but that I will not do. I echo those who say that the present rules are daft. It cannot be right to waste so much time when we could be getting on with our business. If we do not change the rules, there is an obligation on people like me who came here to support the Labour electorate to exploit the rules in the interest of our party. It is better to change the rules and stop that daft system.

6.14 pm

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I am an enthusiastic supporter of the amendment moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). I am strengthened in my view by the knowledge that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is not content merely to rely upon his eloquence and persuasion but wishes to rely upon a three-line Whip upon Ministers and their Parliamentary Private Secretaries later this evening. If my right hon. Friend's arguments were so strong, why cannot he leave them to the House on a truly free vote?

It was implied earlier that the members of the 1983 intake did not count in the House. They have probably had more than their fair share of work on Committees which have had to be guillotined. *[Interruption.]* I accept that other hon. Members have done that. I do not believe that my recent experience is such that it disqualifies me from telling the House of my immediate impressions. I have served on Standing Committees on two Bills that have been guillotined—the Rates Bill and the Transport Bill.

My experience on the Rates Bill was that soon after the Committee stage began I was told that we would have to clock up 80 hours and we would then be able to have a guillotine, which would be marvellous because after that, as Government Back Benchers, we would be allowed to take part in the debate. When the Bill was guillotined, about two pages of it had been debated. The proceedings struck me as a farce. It was a waste of the time and energy of hon. Members. What a childish game it was counting the hours. We were allowed to include in the calculations the period during which the sitting was suspended for dinner and for votes in the House. We were also allowed to include the time taken for various coffee breaks or breaks for other forms of sustenance in the early hours of the morning.

It was in anticipation of one of those breaks that the Committee had one of its moments of humour. It was when not only was the Chairman asleep but his Clerk was also asleep. Some of us were aware that 2.30 am was approaching and that we were entitled to have half an hour for a bacon sandwich. It needed a great deal of movement among members of the Committee to ensure that the Clerk could remind the Chairman that it would be appropriate to suspend the sitting for half an hour. The Chairman, to his great credit, referred to the fact that the Committee had

been on automatic pilot. It appeared to many of us that it had been, because the late and much lamented Member for Tyne Bridge, Mr. Cowans, had then been speaking for many hours. I cannot remember exactly how many, but he had spoken for a considerable time.

A solution to such nonsense must be found. The Procedure Committee has come up with a proposal. What have the Government to lose or fear from an experiment to try to improve matters? The Government recognise that there is a problem. In the minutes of evidence, at question 96 on page 37, when referring to the Telecommunications Bill, my right hon. Friend said:

"I think it is a very good case where an earlier guillotine could have brought about a better consideration of the legislation, and in my view certainly a more civilised one."

My right hon. Friend referred today to turgid pre-timetabled debates. He said that he seeks reform through the flexibility of present procedures. In that case, why has he not used the opportunity presented by the Gas Bill this Session to experiment and tried to introduce a guillotine motion rather earlier than otherwise would have been done?

Mr. Biffen: Earlier than what?

Mr. Chope: As I understood from what my right hon. Friend said in evidence, there is nothing to stop the Government proposing a guillotine motion at an earlier stage.

Mr. Biffen: If my hon. Friend had acquainted himself with the *Hansard* report of the transactions on the proposing of the guillotine motion on the Gas Bill, he would find that I made the point that it was introduced earlier than one might have expected from earlier precedents.

Mr. Chope: I accept what my right hon. Friend says. I did not have the privilege of serving on the Standing Committee, but, having spoken to some of my hon. Friends who did serve on the Committee, I have been told that even so there was a similar farce to that which I described on the Rates Bill in that much time was wasted. More time could have been spent discussing the contentious clauses in detail if the guillotine had been introduced even earlier.

I hope that my hon. Friends will support the amendment because if it is not passed, as other hon. Members who have more experience than me have said, it may be decades before any proposal comes before the House again for similar debate.

6.20 pm

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): I believe that the House is, on the whole, best served by consensus on the part of a Select Committee which it appoints to advise it. Therefore, I believe that more attention should be given to those exceptional cases where Members who have addressed their minds in the Committee to the matters submitted to them have found it impossible, despite their sense of obligation, to arrive at a consensus.

The timetabling of Bills was one of those issues. It was an issue on which the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) and I found ourselves unable to accept the principle of the recommendation which forms the substance of the amendment of the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery). It is very easy to ridicule and there is very much that is ridiculous about the procedure of the House in Committee—the manner in which it disposes of its time, the fact that in Committee apparently an inordinate amount of time is spent on the early clauses of a Bill—although they are often the more important—and less upon the remainder. It is ridiculous that the Government's desire to make progress often condemns the major part of the Committee to silence. All those and other matters of common observation are perfectly true and incontestable, but it is a mistake to assume that for all such inconveniences there is a remedy by way of Standing Order.

Many procedures of the House are indispensable for the purpose of controlling and criticising Government but which, nevertheless, expose the House to inadequacies and inconveniences. However, it does not follow from those inadequacies and inconveniencies that they can wisely be removed by Standing Order. That idea is akin to the delusion that all the inadequacies and difficulties of the human condition can be removed by legislation. Nothing can give more power to a Government or inspire a Government with less interest in the views of hon. Members than to know in advance that, when they have gained the Second Reading of a Bill, by a definite date that Bill will be out of Committee and by a definite date it will reach the statute book. To have the map of the Session laid out before them like a chart, controlled if necessary by a Committee on which they are in the majority, is exactly that paradise to which Governments look forward. *[Interruption.]* I am aware that they can pass a guillotine motion.

From the swan song of the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding), if it was the swan song, we heard how much he looked forward to a future Labour Government who could force through their programme and have the advantage of timetabling Committees and other procedures of the House.

There is only one way in which the two opposite requirements of the House — that the Queen's Government must be carried on and that the Government must be exposed to criticism—can be reconciled, and that is by means of the device of the open end. No open ends are entirely open, of course: the reference which has been made to the guillotine device is a reminder of that. Under a certain penalty, a penalty which appears to have diminished in severity in recent years, the Government can come to the House—and they must come to the House —in order to secure the curtailment of the proceedings. Not that by doing so they free themselves from many of the disadvantages of the Committee procedure without a guillotine. When a guillotine has been imposed, it still happens. Just as many clauses are jumped in each of the sections as would have been omitted in an uncontrolled Committee stage. Under a guillotine, clauses on which many hon. Members might have a special competence or a special constituency reason for wishing to contribute frequently are not debated.

Therefore, the House should not disarm itself of the great power which it has, however limited from time to time, of bringing pressure to bear upon Government and of inducing Government to talk to their opponents, supporters and all and sundry. It is the shortage of time which makes Governments talk.

Mr. Beith: Will the right hon. Gentleman address himself to the fact that the argument about pressure of time is at its weakest when matters are safely tucked away in

[Mr. Beith]

Committee and that, even if the proposals are carried out, there are many other affairs of the House to which the argument about pressure of time can be directed?

Mr. Powell: The Minister responsible for the Bill wants to get it through and the Government of whose programme the Bill is a part want to get their programme through because they are constantly being threatened by new demands for legislation, some of them necessary, and some of them, in the view of others, illegitimate. Therefore, time is always of the essence for Government. Time is the weapon which Governments most fear when it may be used against them. The undoubted inconvenience which hon. Members suffer in the service of the House, with all its imperfections, ought not to persuade the House to disarm itself, formally or automatically, of the use of the instrument of time in the post Second Reading stages of a Bill.

I now come to the other matter on which, although there was no dissent in the report of the Select Committee, there was, nevertheless, a feeling of dissatisfaction within the Committee — the proposal that the experiment with 10-minute speeches should be continued for another Session. Had the proposal been that the 10-minute rule should become a permanent Standing Order of the House, the Committee would not have been unanimous. Indeed, it was a sense that further experience might lead hon. Members to the same conclusion held by many members of the Committee that induced those who would otherwise have been dissentient to go along with the notion that the experiment might justifiably be renewed for another Session.

The Committee found it impossible to establish and was doubtful about the proposition that the 10-minute rule, in the debates in which it was applied, resulted in more hon. Members being able to speak than would otherwise have been the case. Sitting through the concluding stages of major debates when there is pressure on the time of the House and observing how, in the last hour or so, not just 10-minute speeches but speeches of seven, five and three minutes are fitted in, one must be doubtful whether the stately progression of 10-minute speeches for two hours between 6 and 8 o'clock or 7 and 9 o'clock would increase the total number of hon. Members who could contribute.

Dare I insert a query? It has not been voiced and perhaps it is dangerous to voice it. Is it desirable that the maximum numerical toll of Members should contribute to a debate? As the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot) reminded the House, some of the most important matters which hon. Members have sought to bring to our attention at untimely parts of the parliamentary day have required and used many more than 10 minutes. There is a constraint and the internal discipline of public opinion in the House acting on hon. Members which is the only safe and reliable limitation on the length of our speeches. Indeed, there is a sort of analogy between the function of an open end for time in the business of the House and the right of an hon. Member, once called, to occupy the Floor until he has bored the House to his satisfaction. That is the ultimate safeguard of the individual hon. Member's right to take the opportunity which has been accorded to him. We should require much more justification than we have yet had for supposing that the advantages of the 10-minute rule outweigh the disadvantages.

I should like to refer briefly to two minor matters connected with the motion. One has not so far been mentioned. It arises in an amendment to the motion on Special Standing Committees. As the motion stands, it would enable a Minister, by a motion which is to be put forthwith, to alter the 28-day period for Special Standing Committees. I know how open-minded the Leader of the House is on these matters. Indeed, he has proven today his status as a House of Commons man by his stance on the major issue. I submit to the right hon. Gentleman that where a business motion alters, for a specific purpose, a time limit which is in the Standing Orders of the House, it is our custom that it is debatable. If the Government say, "This once for this purpose we should alter this limitation in the Standing Orders," they should have the opportunity of giving reasons and of listening to arguments. I hope that on consideration the right hon. Gentleman will be persuaded that, as with other business motions, it should not be necessary for the motion mentioned in paragraph 4 of motion 4 to be put forthwith.

Finally, the right hon. Gentleman expressed himself as being open-minded about the elimination of the word "written" from motion 11. The distinction which he sought to draw between the nature and purposes of oral questions and written questions cannot be a justification for treating those questions differently, if they are to be swept out of existence by a Session being broken. There have been one or two other observations upon that point during the debate, and I hope that he will find it possible to concur with what was the considered and unanimous advice of the Select Committee, which debated the question whether only written questions should be concerned, and decided that it was wiser that the new Standing Order, if it is made, should apply to both.

6.32 pm

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Part of the price that I pay for representing my constituency is that I am frequently compared with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), to my disadvantage. As I listened to him, I reflected that I shall never have the compendious knowledge and passionate interest in procedure that he has, but also that for all the assertions made by right hon. and hon. Gentlemen that they have a great knowledge and passionate interest in procedure, the House rarely debates it. That is why I doubt whether, if a proposal were introduced on an experimental or interim basis, it would be easy to change the existing procedure. For that reason, I agree with the right hon. Gentleman about experiments.

Most of all, we should recognise that it is extremely difficult for a new Parliament to change the procedure because it is seen to be a way of rigging the new Parliament in such a way as to give yet further impetus to the electorate's decision. I looked with care through the names of the 150 hon. Members who signed the first amendment. While it is true that not all the right hon. and hon. Members came to the House after 1979, a high proportion did. Since the mid-1960s we have seen in particular the rise of presidential politics. To a great extent, a Member of Parliament, especially in this Parliament, is elected, not to be a vigorous Back-Bench Member, whether by choice or chance, but to support his party and leader. The right

hon. and hon. Members reflect their belief that they are here to support their leader and party. They also reflect the sheer numbers of Tory Members who were elected in 1979 and, to a greater extent, in 1983, and the difficulty of finding an issue on which the Government can be defeated.

We do not want to change our procedure so that a different Parliament with different perceptions and priorities is stuck with procedures which may be appropriate to a presidential Parliament, to which hon. Members are not elected to scrutinise the Government or legislation as carefully as may have been done in previous Parliaments. Therefore, I entirely agree with the views of my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that if we agree to these proposals for automatic timetabling, we on the Back Benches would give the Executive a greater power than has been given to it previously. That would be dangerous, because it would fetter the choice of the people, which is decided by their vote, and the mysterious consequences that their collective vote has. To some extent it is hampered by the procedures of the House. If, in a future Parliament, the mysterious consequence of the collective vote is that we have a Government who believe, not in radical action and a presidential style, but in carrying on the Queen's business quietly, with more consensus, and perhaps even more deference to the House, we have procedures for them. The checks and balances continue to exist. I have nothing new or interesting to say about the proposals for automatic timetabling, except that I agree with my right hon. Friend and with the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore).

There is a proposal for a Legislative Business Committee, which is to be independent. For a short period I was rather oddly positioned in the Whips Office, and I saw something of the way in which it operated. The great advantage of the House in relation to the Whips Offices is that Whips are wrongly credited with having great power and influence, and they are understandably disliked. Except for occasional members of the Whips Offices, they remain silent, and do not even leak.

It is precisely because Whips Offices are so obviously partisan and disliked that they have to behave better than Committees which are allegedly independent. Most of all, they operate continuously. There can be no question of swinging one over and humiliating the Whips Office on the other side. One would know that if one had done a chap last week, he would return the compliment the next week. Therefore, it is important that the broad consensus of the House of Commons is adhered to. We must adhere to the broad, changing consensus of what is decent, honourable and fair within the constraints of fierce party battle.

It is difficult to decide exactly what those conventions are, but, surprisingly enough, they seem to be well understood by the usual channels. The proposals which give great power to the allegedly independent Committee will be to the disadvantage of the House of Commons. The allegedly independent Committee will be governed by the majority — by the Government. It will have a Government majority on it. Most important, it will not have to do business with the Opposition Whips next week and will, from time to time, behave badly. It will no doubt behave like that for partisan reasons, sometimes for reasons of patronage, and sometimes for reasons of friendship. However, it will behave badly.

I suggest that even if the House decides — in my opinion quite wrongly—to have automatic timetabling, the much abused, much hated, but nevertheless effective system of the usual channels ought to be kept.

6.41 pm

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): I join the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) in paying tribute to the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) for his kindness and tolerance in chairing the Select Committee on Procedure and for allowing hon. Members like me, who have a distinct minority view on that Committee, to have if anything more than our fair share of say in the Committee's deliberations. The Committee is very hard working.

It is rare for me to disagree with a Select Committee of which I am a member. I have never before voted against reporting a Select Committee's findings to the House. However, I found the proposals on timetabling so unacceptable that, like the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), I felt that I had no choice but to vote against them.

I cannot support the recommendation in the fourth motion about Special Standing Committees. The evidence to which the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred, and the other evidence that exists, is overwhelmingly in favour of the Special Standing Committees.

I ask hon. Members to examine the amendment to the recommendation in the second motion about committal. It is odd to limit committal to Special Standing Committees to a Minister of the Crown. If the Special Standing Committees were used more frequently, and on a broader range of Bills, many of the problems which hon. Members who support the first amendment are facing would be solved.

The hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to the statement by the Solicitor-General on what is now the Criminal Attempts Act 1981. I do not want to return to that, save to say that I believe that the point raised by the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed would be true for a large number of Bills.

Referral to Special Standing Committees would take account of more than just the point made by the hon. Member for Honiton. It is illogical to argue that the enforced timetabling and consideration of all the clauses of a Bill some of which, as all hon. Members know, are inconsequential, would provide for either better understanding of the Bill or a realisation by Ministers sponsoring the Bill that there was something fundamentally wrong with it. We would, as usual, be in opposition politics.

Consideration by a Special Standing Committee, in which detailed evidence could be taken from the people affected, could have a profound effect on Ministers, in a way which my making a speech would not have, even if I or other hon. Members were subsequently proved to be right.

I too, would like to enter the "Guinness Book of Records". As a Member sponsored by the National Communications Union, I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) on being elected as my general secretary. He spoke an hour ago, and I should like to be the first to disagree with him. His conclusions about the timetabling of all Bills and the use of a Legislative Business Committee are utterly wrong. If Conservative Members had listened to my hon.

[Mr. John McWilliam]

Friend's arguments they would all vote against the recommendation, because my hon. Friend made strong arguments against it.

I believe that the history of successive Governments in relation to the rights and privileges of hon. Members is not a good one. Our rights and privileges have been seriously eroded over the years. If we introduce a Legislative Business Committee, our rights and privileges will be further eroded. We have not considered properly the kind of animal that we wish to create. The Committee would not be the kind of flexible body that the hon. Member for Honiton would have us believe. For example, the recommendation in paragraph 36 of the report of the Select Committee on Procedure states that the Committee should consist of senior Back-Bench Members to be elected by a Committee of Selection without the interference of the Whips. If hon. Members believe that, they will believe anything. We all know, and I am a Whip myself, what happens in the Committee of Selection. We should not be naive at the start.

We are also asked to believe that, as paragraph 39 of the Select Committee on Procedure states:

"Any system of time-tabling needs to preserve a measure of flexibility to cope with unexpected developments during the progress of a Bill."

That is all very well, but paragraph 39 continues:

"Such a request should only be made if entirely new factors arose during a bill's progress—factors not known when the maximum number of hours was set."

Again that is all very well, but what happens if a mistake has been made? What happens if we have it wrong and the members of the Legislative Business Committee do not understand the full impact of some of the Bill's clauses?

One of two things would then happen. Either a Committee would be horribly strapped for time and so be unable to carry out the kind of investigation which the hon. Member for Honiton suggested, or it would be sitting around wondering what to do next and inventing amendments. That is the situation that could arise, and it is another problem which the Legislative Business Committee could cause.

The Americans invented such an animal about 150 years ago. Its original purpose was to do just what the hon. Member for Honiton suggested it ought to do. It has developed in such a way that the Executive now comes to the Committee as a supplicant. The Committee has a life of its own, and has taken to itself prerogatives which used to exist on the Floor of the House of Representatives. That could happen if a similar Committee were appointed here.

I invite hon. Members to vote against the first recommendation. If Conservative Members are worried about Committees sitting too late at night, I remind them that the Chairmen of Standing Committees will not accept a closure motion from a member of the Opposition. They will accept a closure motion only from a Minister. Government Members have the solution in their own hands. If they walk out of the Committee, I assure them that Opposition Members will follow, rendering the Committee inquorate, and that will sort out the Whip. It is not the Opposition but the Government who run Committees all night.

There is a misconception that the only weapon that the Opposition have is time. That is not true. The only weapon that the Opposition have is uncertainty, and the function of that is time. We must understand that.

Mr. Patrick Thompson *rose*——

Mr. McWilliam: I shall not give way, because other hon. Members wish to speak, and I wish to conclude my speech.

If the Opposition can keep uncertainty, the Government cannot put too much legislation through the House, because they cannot map their progress, as the right hon. Member for South Down said. If the Opposition lose that uncertainty, we shall be faced with more legislation, more pressure, more congestion and fewer rights for Back-Bench Members.

6.50 pm

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): The Select Committee, which was charged with looking at all public Bill procedures and making recommendations to the House, did not seek, nor does it claim to have achieved in its recommendations, perfection. It sought improvement, and that is what its recommendations will achieve. It did not arrive at them quickly. Its Chairman allowed full debate — not just one observation from each of the Committee members — and the subject to be worked over until some consensus or irrevocable dissent had been arrived at.

I cannot share the view of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that he should possess a veto on the recommendation of the Select Committee.

The major Committee recommendation before the House is one that will avoid useless wastage of time and improve the scrutiny of legislation. That is its objective, and that it will secure more perfectly than the present arrangement. From all sections of the House, appeals to the Committee have come, both before it was seized of this subject and during discussions, to grasp the nettle. Therefore, I am glad that the Government have given prime time to debate this matter. I am less happy at the pressure that is being put on Ministers and others to vote, not on the merit of the argument, but according to the wishes of the Government.

My right hon. Friend made it clear that he was unaware that we were also debating the "take note" motion. We are debating "take note" of the first report of the Select Committee on Procedure. As a matter of interest, I point out that there are precedents for the House considering the passage of a "take note" motion to be an authority—not just an approval. I have had correspondence with the Accountant of the House, which went to Mr. Speaker Thomas, over what authority, if any, there was for paying the expenses of Select Committees when they were within the United Kingdom taking evidence but outside the Palace of Westminster. The answer was a "take note" motion on a report of a Select Committee, not on a motion to approve.

Therefore, it is highly relevant to know, on the "take note" motion, what the views of the two Front Benches are —the Opposition Front Bench refused to give its view —on paragraph 6 of the first report. That quite clearly recommends against the existing practice—it is not a Standing Order—whereby successive Speakers have let it be understood that they disapproved strongly of a

Standing Order No. 10 application being raised on a matter that had already been the subject, by the same Member, but only by the same Member, of a private notice question.

This is absurd, as the Select Committee agreed unanimously, for two reasons. First, the rules under which a private notice question is granted are not the same as the rules governing a Standing Order No. 10 application. Secondly, that interdiction does not apply to any of the other 649 Members, but only to the Member who has raised a private notice question application. That in itself is absurd.

The Committee also looked at the injustices that can arise as a result of accusations being made against a person or body exterior to the House by a Standing Order No. 10 application, which cannot be answered because the procedures do not give any opportunity to answer them. Therefore, there is a lot to be said for a freer granting of a private notice question, where the subject can be responded to by other hon. Members, within the limitations of Mr. Speaker's discretion. That is not the case in the constraints of an application under Standing Order No. 10, to which, however unbased the charges made, there can be no reply. Even if hon. Members, on another occasion, engineer the occasion for a reply, it will never get the same publicity as the original application. That is why, in paragraph 6 of the first report, that specific recommendation was made.

Therefore, it is unfortunate that, by the Government not tabling this as a specific motion, the only way in which we can discover whether Mr. Speaker will be guided by the Select Committee on the matter is if he is good enough to make his own determination known, either of his own volition, or in response to a point of order, made, one would hope, with reasonable notice to him. Other points have been made so well that I do not wish to detain the House on them. I merely wished to make the one point, to which insufficient attention has been paid.

6.56 pm

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I was greatly relieved to hear the hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) introduce a note of reality into the debate, after the romantic, not to say sentimental, speeches that we heard from the Government and Opposition Front Benches. I do not know whether the fact that their duties some time ago relieved them of having to sit in a Committee for hours on end has resulted in their memory being slightly dimmed, but they were not talking about the world that I know in those Committee rooms. I remind my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), who is the greatest romantic of us all, that the film industry has moved on a little since the days of Buster Keaton and some of us think that it might be a good thing if the House of Commons did as well.

The most unfortunate thing about the speech made by the Leader of the House was that he dealt at great length with one of the elements in the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Honiton and left out the other. Taking the two together is vital. Either one on its own would swing the balance of advantage either to the Government or to the Opposition, but the two together keep the balance where it is, while making the House of Commons a great deal more efficient and, more importantly, providing a more civilised and healthy way of life for those who have to work here. Nobody can pretend that our system is conducive to good health. It is ridiculous that an hon. Member can sit all night in Committee. The hon. Member for Honiton was right to say that people outside think that we are mad. Unfortunately, I can find little evidence to prove that we are not.

There was a time when Oppositions would regard it as a great victory if they were able to slow down the progress of a Bill to the point where the Government had to come to the House for a guillotine motion. Ministers would come quite shamefacedly to ask the House to give them a timetable because they had been in Committee for 90 hours and had reached only clause 1. Those days have gone. Ministers are no longer embarrassed when they come along for a guillotine; it is just a matter of course.

The idea that something is achieved by the Opposition by holding a Bill up as long as they can to bring about a guillotine is nonsense because nothing is won by that. Despite what my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has said, Ministers know from the word go their target date for getting a Bill out of Committee. Everybody knows that and we should not pretend that the situation is any different. Because Ministers are prepared to go for a guillotine if necessary, they sit back quite happily in the Standing Committee as Opposition Members flog themselves to death in the middle of the night. Meanwhile Government supporters go out on a rota basis to have a sleep in the room next door.

The only people suffering are the poor old Chairmen, and I hope hon. Members will spare a thought for the Chairmen, because, despite what we heard from the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) about one of my hon. Friends who apparently dozed off a little, the fact is that we are supposed to sit there and listen to people like my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle under Lyme (Mr. Golding) speaking interminably. We are supposed to listen to every word to make sure that nobody is out of order.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the result of that, as happened recently on the Telecommunications Bill, is that we end up without the legislation being properly considered? As a result of that, it all goes through without consideration until it reaches the Upper House.

Mr. Crowther: I think that point has already been made. I am glad my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme spoke about his marathon performance that brought him worldwide fame. I was about to mention it anyway. The thing that is remembered about that speech, the big talking point, is that he spoke for 11¼ hours, but does anybody remember what he said? My hon. Friend remembers but nobody else does. Nobody remembered even the next day. What mattered was that it had taken 11¼ hours to say it. That demonstrates the farcical nature of our present proceedings.

It is in the interests of the Opposition as well as the Government to have a timetable clearly laid out at the beginning so that Opposition Members can work out what amount of time to allocate to each clause. That in itself would give an advantage to the Government, as hon. Members have said. But we must balance against that the time limit on the sittings. I agree with the recommendation by the Select Committee about 10 o'clock, but whatever it is, a time limit on sittings would prevent the Government using all their allocated hours quickly by keeping the Committee there all night on Tuesday and all night on

[Mr. Crowther]

Thursday and all night the next week and then saying, "My goodness, we have only been there a fortnight but we have got all the hours in." A time limit on sittings would prevent that and these two proposals taken together—that is the essential qualification—would provide us with a far more sensible way of carrying on our business.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: It may be for the convenience of the House if I say that I understand the Leader of the House will seek to rise at 14 minutes past 7 because the debate ends at 20 past 7.

7.5 pm

Mr. Ian Lloyd (Havant): I have listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther). He injected a refreshing element of common sense into the debate and I agree with much of what he said. This is a powerfully interesting debate and while listening to it, I could not help reflecting that hon. Members approach power in much the same way as artists approach colour. Van Gogh saw it in bold and brilliant strokes and his pictures are at least discernible. Canaletto had to have it in the greatest possible detail—that is my preference—and Salvador Dali used his colour in such a way that the only thing discernible is chaos. Listening to the debate, it seemed to me that at times there was a preference for chaos. We are used to that.

I contribute to the debate with a considerable sense of humility, because I have never regarded myself in any sense, and certainly not in the sense of two of the right hon. Members who have spoken, as an expert on procedure. It may sound paradoxical but I have a great and profound respect for this place and a somewhat less and less profound respect for its procedure. In some senses, it has been damaging to our democracy.

I agree with both the right hon. Members on one matter, and it is about the limitation of speeches to 10 minutes. If we applied that rule rigidly Burke, Fox, Pitt, Disraeli, Gladstone and right hon. Members presently in the Chamber would never have spoken or developed their careers as they have done. The rigid application of a 10 minute rule is particularly unfair to those hon. and right hon. Members who speak rarely in the House, and perhaps do so quite deliberately, and those who speak regularly on every conceivable occasion. Perhaps the self-limiting rule should apply much more rigorously to the latter than it does to the former.

The topic I want to raise in this debate can be summarised in two sentences of the report. They are critical and of the greatest importance. The first sentence is on page xxiii, and I agree with every word. It says about the House:

"Present practices do its prestige a profound disservice".

That is true, and it would be found to be true if we conducted an opinion poll among our constituents or even among those who follow the affairs of the House in the greatest detail. Alas and alack, they are few in number. Whatever we may say to justify it, our general reputation is that our procedure is archaic and damaging, and does not serve democracy. That is why I strongly support what my hon Friend has done in the work of this Committee.

The second sentence is equally important. In the first sentence of paragraph 45 the Committee recommends:

"proceedings in standing committees should not be allowed to continue beyond 10 pm."

I strongly endorse that. My experience in this House does not compare with that of many right hon. Members. I have been here for some 21 years, 10 years in opposition and 11 years—I was about to say in government—out of government. There is a vital distinction and one which can be described by those who have experienced it as soul-searing, perhaps. There are those who would have taken part in this debate had they been alive. They are not here, they are dead. I can give two examples: David Webster on the Government side of the House and Stephen Swingler on the Opposition side. I am convinced those two men lost their lives because of this procedure. However, they are not here and their names are not recorded on any tablets of stone or on any vellum parchment. They contributed their lives to a procedure that is archaic and totally indefensible.

I regret that the Government are using the method they are to defend this procedure which, as the years have gone by, has revealed itself increasingly to successive generations of hon. Members as profoundly indefensible. I so call it, and I so describe it. No one who looks at the operations of this place, even in the context of democracy and in the context that we are here to check the Executive, can possibly argue that this must go on basically unchanged or that this important report should not be accepted in any sense. If we ask ourselves the question: has it worked, has it produced the most successful western democracy since the end of the second world war, the answer must be no. If we ask: has it produced what one can describe as the most successful economy since the end of the second world war under successive Governments, again the answer must be no. Has it produced the most stable, civil society in the Western world? Perhaps there alone the answer can be yes, but we cannot say it is due to the procedures of this House. It is due to far more basic and fundamental democratic attributes of which we are rightly and justly proud.

If we want to go forward to a state where we can defend the future of this House, the future of our democracy and the relevance of our procedures here and elsewhere to the kind of problems that our society is facing, we shall not do it by keeping people, who have worn themselves out throughout the day and who have been here since possibly nine in the morning, until two or three o'clock the following morning, and then seriously expect that their contribution to the discussion will be sensible, intelligent and relevant. No one can pretend it is and the country does not think it is. Therefore I support what my hon. Friend has proposed, with all the conviction that I can command.

7.9 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I congratulate the Select Committee on its work and on its report, and I support the amendment that has been tabled to try to ensure some sanity in the pattern of work in Standing Committees and in our handling of legislation. I also thank the Committee for giving us an opportunity to give evidence and, in giving that evidence, to draw attention to the fact that more than 70 per cent. of hon. Members who responded to a questionnaire—that was more than half the number of hon. Members in the House—said that they wanted a change in this vital area.

I entered the House 12 years ago tomorrow. Other hon. Members have had much more experience than I have, but

during that time I have served on the Committees considering the Industry Bill and the Telecommunications Bill and I have seen how time can be wasted. I accept that using time can sometimes hold the Government back, but the practice has had minimal success over the years. I congratulate the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mr. Golding) on his appointment, but I must tell him that even if the Opposition had not achieved such success in Committee the Telecommunications Bill would not have gone through because of the election in May. Even in that instance, the case is not proven.

I am in a different position from almost all hon. Members in that I am always likely to be in opposition, as are my colleagues in Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National party. However, we still believe that it makes much more sense to get coherent legislation out of Committees instead of spending so many hours in Committee day and night to no purpose whatever. If we used our time constructively, we would have much better legislation than we do now. There is no earthly justification for spending hour after hour in Committee, as we do on many Bills.

I regret the fact that the Government believe it necessary to put pressure on the so-called payroll vote to be present here tonight. May I suggest that the real vote in a few minutes' time will be the Back Bench vote, and the votes of the payroll should be disregarded in trying to establish the will of the House.

7.12 pm

Mr. Charles Morrison (Devizes): I agree with the right hon. Member for Down, South (Mr. Powell) that it is a mistake to assume that the remedy for all the weaknesses, shortcomings and failings in the legislative process lies in Standing Orders. Perfection would be to have no Standing Orders, as is the case in another place, but I suppose that that would be too near to paradise for this House. We had to develop Standing Orders over the years to cope with our procedure. Standing Orders are the framework within which we operate, but there is no reason why the framework should not be renewed and redesigned in the light of circumstances. The proposals of the Select Committee on Procedure, especially the amendment of my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), are aimed at modernising our procedure just a little.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said that the proposals were radical. If he believes that, he is being a little unambitious. I regard them as moderate, mild, timely and full of good sense. Some of the speeches that we heard today about the implied perfection of our present procedures almost force me into despair.

My hon. Friend the Member for Honiton argued his case with great dexterity. I repeat what he said about why the recommendations are before the House. The Procedure Committee was specifically instructed to examine the time spent on legislation in Committee because Members of Parliament and the outside world were dissatisfied with the way in which we conduct our business. The proposals contained in the report and my hon. Friend's amendment will go some small way towards improving matters.

7.14 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you tell me which rule in "Erskine May" says that in a three-hour debate on a procedure motion we must have eight speeches from hon. Members who served on the Select Committee and four speeches from Privy Councillors? Surely this was an opportunity to listen to other Back-Bench Members, not to Members who sat on the Committee.

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was the only Member who wished to speak who was not called.

7.15 pm

Mr. Biffen: I do not wish to engage in further controversy, least of all upon the issue of timetabling, which has occupied so much of this evening's debate. However, I shall make one or two comments in response to specific points that were put to me on other issues.

May I first respond to the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) regarding his amendment to the motion on Special Standing Committees. I am happy to accept his amendment.

In that context, may I also refer to the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) on committal, which raises much more substantial points. I repeat the Government's preference that they should control commital to Special Standing Committees, partly because the convention has arisen that the Special Standing Committee procedure should apply to Bills that raise substantial issues not of acute party controversy. Therefore, one will appreciate that there is a real interest in the Government's determining which Bills should come within that category.

The right hon. Gentleman also asked about questions that lapse because of an overrun in business. The Government's view—it is shared more widely—is that written answers merit reinstatement, which is a fairly straightforward procedure. However, if oral questions were reinstated as written questions, it would prevent those hon. Members who had tabled them as oral questions from putting them down again as oral questions for six months. It was thought that, on the whole, this would put those hon. Members at a disadvantage. That was the basis on which we made our judgment.

Finally, on a personal note, I feel obliged to refer to the speech of the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), whose reference to me as a latter-day Buster Keaton of the Treasury Bench leads me to believe that, unlike me, he is old enough to have seen those films in the 1930s and is showing the social disposition which I do not have of watching the repeats at weekends. Therefore, I am unable to judge the implied compliment or otherwise, but I console myself with the fact that at least I am not described as the Boris Karloff of Tory monetarism.

Amendment proposed to the proposed motion in line 4, at end add

' ; approves in principle the holding of an experiment implementing, during the next session of Parliament, recommendations Nos. 9 to 16 contained in the Committee's Second Report relating to timetabling of Government bills and to the time of rising of standing committees; and believes that the Committee should monitor the operation of such an experiment.'.—*[Sir Peter Emery.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 166, Noes 231.

Division No. 86] **[7.20 pm**

AYES

Alexander, Richard	Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Alton, David	Beith, A. J.
Ashby, David	Bellingham, Henry
Ashdown, Paddy	Benyon, William
Ashton, Joe	Best, Keith
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Bevan, David Gilroy
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Bidwell, Sydney

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brinton, Tim
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cormack, Patrick
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dover, Den
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forth, Eric
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Golding, John
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harvey, Robert
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Heddle, John
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCrindle, Robert
Maclennan, Robert
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Antony
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Michie, William
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Normanton, Tom
O'Brien, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parris, Matthew
Pike, Peter
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Hugh McCartney and
Mr. Roger Sims.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Couchman, James
Craigen, J. M.
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dubs, Alfred
Dunn, Robert
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Ewing, Harry
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leighton, Ronald
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marek, Dr John
Marland, Paul
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxton, John
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meacher, Michael
Mellor, David
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard

Nellist, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spearing, Nigel
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Ward, John
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being more than three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to put forthwith the remaining Questions necessary to dispose of the Motions relating to Procedure, Committal of Bills, Public Bills relating exclusively to Scotland, Special Standing Committees, Powers of Chair to propose Question, Majority for Closure, Procedure in Standing Committees, Closure of Debate, Third Reading, Short Speeches, Questions to Members, and Adjournment on Specific and Important Matter that should have Urgent Consideration, pursuant to order [21 February].*

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Second, Third and Fourth Reports of the Select Committee on Procedure of Session 1984-85 (House of Commons Papers Nos. 49, 396 and 623) and of the First Report of the Select Committee on Procedure of this Session (House of Commons Paper No. 42).

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of bills) be amended, as follows:

Line 8, after 'committee', insert 'or to a special standing committee';

Line 11, after 'Member', insert '(except a motion to commit a bill to a special standing committee, which may be made only by a Minister of the Crown)'.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Amendment proposed to the Question, to leave out lines 3 and 4—*[Sir Peter Emery.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 196, Noes, 158.

Division No. 87] **[7.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blackburn, John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Brinton, Tim
Bruce, Malcolm
Buck, Sir Antony
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Dykes, Hugh
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forth, Eric
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Golding, John
Greenway, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jackson, Robert
Janner, Hon Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Malins, Humfrey
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Murphy, Christopher
Nellist, David
Nelson, Anthony
Normanton, Tom
O'Neill, Martin
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parris, Matthew
Pavitt, Laurie
Pike, Peter
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg

Radice, Giles
Raffan, Keith
Randall, Stuart
Rathbone, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowe, Andrew
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silvester, Fred
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spencer, Derek
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Welsh, Michael
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Hugh McCartney and
Mr. Roger Sims.

NOES

Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Grist, Ian
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marland, Paul
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Renton, Tim
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Tony Durant.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 70 (Public bills relating exclusively to Scotland) be amended by inserting, after the word 'Committee' in lines 32 and 41, the words '(or a special standing committee)'.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That—

(1) A special standing committee to which a bill has been committed shall have power during a period not exceeding 28 days (excluding periods when the House is adjourned for more than two days) from the committal of the bill, to send for persons, papers and records, and, for this purpose, to hold up to four morning sittings of not more than three hours each. At not more than three sittings oral evidence may be given and, unless the committee otherwise orders, all such evidence shall be given in public. Oral evidence shall be printed in the Official Report of the committee's debates together with such written evidence as the committee may order to be so printed.

(2) For the sittings referred to in paragraph (1) of this order, and nothwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 64 (Chairmen of standing committees), Mr. Speaker may appoint any Member other than a Minister of the Crown as chairman of a special standing committee.

(3) Except as provided in the foregoing paragraphs, the standings orders relating to standing committees and Standing Orders No. 84 (Withdrawal of documents before select committees), No. 88 (Entry of questions asked), No. 93 (Witnesses and evidence (select committees)) and No. 94 (Publication of evidence (select committees)) shall apply to any special standing committee.

(4) The question on any motion made by a Minister of the Crown to extend the period of 28 days mentioned in paragraph (1) of this order may be decided after the expiration of the time for opposed business and shall be put forthwith.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Amendment made to the Question, in line 21, leave out "and shall be put forthwith."—*[Mr. J. Enoch Powell.]*

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That—

(1) When a Member is in the course of making a motion or moving an amendment at any stage of proceedings on a Bill, a Member rising in his place may claim to move, 'That the question be now proposed', and, unless it shall appear to the chair that such motion is an abuse of the rules of the House, the question, 'That the question be now proposed' shall be put forthwith.

(2) This order shall apply in committee only when the Chairman of Ways and Means or either Deputy Chairman is in the chair.

That this Order be a Standing Order of the House.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 32 (Majority for closure) be amended, as follows:

Line 3, after 'debate)', insert 'or for the proposal of the question under Standing Order (Powers of chair to propose question)'.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 68 (Procedure in standing committees) be amended, as follows;

Line 24, after 'debate)', insert ', Standing Order (Powers of chair to propose question)':

Line 27, after 'closure', insert 'or for the proposal of the question'.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 31 (Closure of debate) be amended, as follows:

Line 18, leave out paragraph (3).—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 58 (Third reading) be amended, as follows:

Line 4, leave out paragraph (2).—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Motion made, and Question put,

That—

(1) For the remainder of the present Session Mr. Speaker may announce at the commencement of public business that, because of the number of Members wishing to speak in a debate on one of the matters specified in paragraph (2) of this Order, he will call Members either between six o'clock and ten minutes before eight o'clock or between seven o'clock and ten minutes before nine o'clock on Monday to Thursday sittings, and between half-past eleven o'clock and one o'clock on Friday sittings, to speak for not more than ten minutes; and whenever Mr. Speaker has made such an announcement he may, between those hours, direct any Member who has spoken for ten minutes in such a debate to resume his seat forthwith.

(2) This Order shall apply to debates on:

(a) the second reading of public bills;

(b) matters selected under paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 6 (Arrangement of public business) for consideration on allotted Opposition days; and

(c) motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 32.

Division No. 88] **[7.45 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Barnett, Guy
Batiste, Spencer
Benyon, William
Bermingham, Gerald
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Boyes, Roland
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cockeram, Eric
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dixon, Donald
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dubs, Alfred
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fletcher, Alexander
Forman, Nigel
Forrester, John
Forth, Eric
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Glyn, Dr Alan
Golding, John
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Hoyle, Douglas
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Janner, Hon Greville
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
McWilliam, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*

Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nellist, David
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parris, Matthew
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pavitt, Laurie
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Randall, Stuart
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rooker, J. W.
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Welsh, Michael
Wheeler, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Francis Maude

NOES

Alton, David
Barron, Kevin
Beith, A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Antony
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Moate, Roger
O'Neill, Martin
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Steel, Rt Hon David
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wrigglesworth, Ian

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Robert Maclennan

Question accordingly agreed to.

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 8 (Questions to Members) be amended, as follows:

Line 99, at end, add—

'(9) Any questions tabled for written answer on a day on which this House does not sit by reason of the continuance of a previous sitting shall be deemed to be questions for written answer on the next sitting day and shall appear on the order paper for that day.'—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Ordered,

That Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) be amended, as follows:

Line 4, after 'propose', insert 'in an application lasting not more than three minutes'.—*[Mr. Biffen.]*

Orders of the Day

Housing (Scotland) Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 1

HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY

'(1) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State for Scotland to carry out and publish the results of a national House Condition Survey at intervals no greater than 5 years. The field work for the first such Survey is to be commenced no later than April 1987.

(2) The development of the Survey shall be carried out by the Secretary of State in conjunction with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities which shall agree the design, survey sample size, monitoring of the field work and the format of the publication of the Survey.

(3) The Secretary of State shall agree with COSLA the appointment of an independent consultant or consultants to the Survey.

(4) The House Condition Survey shall be carried out in accordance with the requirements of Schedule A.' — *[Mr. Dewar.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

7.57 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this we are to consider amendment No. 14—New Schedule A—

'1. The HCS must be designed to provide sufficient information to test the adequacy and effectiveness of existing housing policy and legislation, and to formulate new policies and legislation where these are found to be necessary.

The information obtained by the HCS shall also be sufficient to review the adequacy of existing resource provision.

2. All information gathered by the HCS shall be published in a format which provides details both nationally and for each district and island authority.

3. The HCS shall provide information about the condition of all existing dwellings and their facilities. The dwellings shall be identified by the type of their construction, age and tenure.

It will include, *inter alia*, the number of dwellings in each category which:

(i) require statutory action under the Housing (Scotland) Acts;

(ii) require structural or other repairs and the extent of any such repairs necessary to provide a minimum 30-year life for the dwelling;

(iii) lack facilities (including e.g. Standard Amenities, central heating, insulation);

(iv) require improvement (including full or partial modernisation, rewiring); and

(v) fail to meet the criteria for the Tolerable Standard.

4. In addition the HCS must be carried out in such a manner as to provide an accurate assessment of the number of dwellings in each category which suffer from rising or penetrating damp or condensation.

5. The HCS shall specify the cost and other resources requirements of the work identified as necessary.

6. It shall also indicate the timescale within which the work identified should, in the professional opinion of the surveyor, be carried out.

7. The HCS shall be accompanied by such other social, household and local authority surveys as may be required to determine social and expenditure priorities.).

Mr. Dewar: I have pleasure in putting forward a simple proposition, based on common sense, which commands widespread support in Scotland. I need hardly tell the House that I expect the Minister to resist it. Our proposal is that Scotland should have a national house condition survey, which would provide us with much information about the state of the Scottish housing stock. We should try to gather a solid and sound basis of information before we draw up our housing plans. We should assess the scale of damage and need before we plan how to meet it. It is a straightforward and admirably sensible suggestion. It is not confined to the public sector, where information can be gathered by means of check lists supplied by the local authorities. It would extend the knowledge of the Scottish Office into the more difficult private sector area, especially private sector rented and tenement accommodation. A survey would give us an accurate snapshot of the state of our housing stock, which could then be updated.

We have had a fair amount of skirmishing over the months, and I understand that the Government are opposed to a house condition survey, on the ground that it is unnecessary. They say that they already have all that they require in the information supplied by local authorities. They argue, therefore, that a national house condition survey is a luxury which we do not need and possibly cannot afford. My first answer is one that I have already given — local authorities are telling only part of the story. My second answer is that I believe that the basis on which the checklist is compiled is not as satisfactory or as accurate as a house condition survey would be.

Anyone who looks at the continuing debate on the dampness problem—that scourge of living standards in Scotland—will appreciate the point. I do not think that one can seriously dispute that the checklists compiled by local authorities seriously underestimate the scale of the dampness problem. I believe that an impartially conducted survey — "impartially" meaning an outside agency performing a specific task with training and incentives —would provide a more accurate picture of the dangers and difficulties in Scottish housing.

This is not a revolutionary proposition. Many people have supported it. A house condition survey is conducted in Northern Ireland. There have been surveys in 1974, 1979 and 1984, and it is intended to continue to update them. That is one part of the United Kingdom where the house condition survey is seen as a useful tool and is part of the continuing process of monitoring and coping with housing problems.

A house condition survey in England is undertaken by the Department of the Environment. It has provided remarkable statistics on what is happening in England, which might, if they were mirrored in Scotland, put a different complexion on the debate on housing. In 1985, looking at local authority stock alone, the survey found that there were just over 4·5 million dwelling houses, of which no fewer than 3·8 million required expenditure— 84 per cent. of the total stock. This would have involved expenditure of £18·8 billion. Those are formidable figures. The Department of the Environment apparently found no insurmountable obstacles to carrying out that survey and bringing it to a successful conclusion. I cite those English figures because they suggest that a similar survey in Scotland would produce startling figures which, I hope, would do something to jerk Ministers from their present inertia and complacency about housing in Scotland.

The English survey estimated that the average cost of repair and renovation per dwelling was £4,900. There is no reason to think—I say this cautiously—that Scottish housing stock is in a significantly better state than housing stock south of the border. There may be arguments for

[Mr. Dewar]

suggesting the opposite, but let us give it the benefit of the doubt. If one applies the average cost which was discovered south of the border to the 840,000 council houses in Scotland, note that one finds that a frighteningly substantial sum would be required merely to renovate and bring Scottish housing stock to the standard that we should expect in a civilised society. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has said that we need £880 million a year over five years—that figure is similar to the one arrived at by making my calculations—merely to stop a backlog from building up, and continuing deterioration.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting, as he appears to be by using those figures, that every unit of the council housing stock in Scotland needs that average amount spent on it? How has this come about when, in the past 15 years, 80 per cent. of council housing stock in Scotland has been either renovated or newly built?

Mr. Dewar: The hon. Gentleman is right. There is room for argument. When he makes that point, he makes a case for a house condition survey. If one assumed that the picture in Scotland was similar to that south of the border, one would expect about 80 per cent. of council house stock in Scotland to need that kind of work done on it, and the amount would run into the figures that I have cited. The Under-Secretary of State may say that that is alarmist, gloomy and unjustified scaremongering—no doubt all sorts of phrases may come tripping off his tongue—but I merely underline the fact that we do not really know because Ministers obstinately refuse to carry out the house condition survey for which we are asking. I am asking merely for a reasonable proposition to be put forward, based on the English experience. Of course I shall listen if the Under-Secretary of State can give me substantial reasons why the picture in Scotland should be different. I believe that we should get out of this rather sterile debate in which the hon. Gentleman takes what seems to me to be a plausible proposition and pours scorn upon it, but refuses to produce the wherewithal which would allow us to settle the argument in a civilised, sensible way.

Mr. Barry Henderson (Fife, North-East): Surely the local authorities should have been establishing for a long time what the problems are if they were serious about maintaining their housing stock. I submit that if there is a problem on the scale suggested by the hon. Gentleman, local authorities have not been doing their job properly.

Mr. Dewar: That is an interesting proposition. I think that local authorities would say that they have been trying for a long time to alert the Government to the dangers and problems and have found that it was equivalent to a dialogue with the deaf. They have been pressing for a house condition survey and for the necessary resources. I say to the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson), before he becomes obsessed with public sector housing stock, that I was careful to say that a house condition survey would be particularly valuable to the private sector, especially the private rented sector.

Mr. David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): I am relieved that the hon. Gentleman stressed that last point, because I was worried that he had concentrated solely on local authority housing. Is he aware that the number of houses below tolerable standard in Ettrick and Lauderdale is much higher than the Scottish average? We are talking not about trivial repairs, but about housing which is still below the tolerable standard laid down years ago—for example, 7 per cent. in Galashiels and 5 per cent. in the district as a whole. These are not, in the main, council houses.

Mr. Dewar: I entirely agree. The right hon. Gentleman has pointed to the diversity of problems within housing stock in Scotland. He has reinforced my general case. I do not want to suggest that this is a council house campaign alone. I used those figures because I was comparing housing in Scotland with the English housing figures in the recent survey down south.

The Opposition take a different view of the realities and of the Government's efforts. The commentary on the public expenditure White Paper which was produced in February—this month—gives a useful table showing expenditure in constant terms. In 1980-81 the Government committed to housing across the board—I am not making a public sector point alone—£1·005 billion, but by 1985-86 that had decreased to £589 million. In five years the Government's commitment to home improvement grants in the private sector, to support in the public sector, and to every form of housing activity had almost halved in real terms. If Conservative Members suggest, in the face of those figures, that the crisis is the fault of local government, they are allowing all common sense to be overruled by blind party loyalty.

The figures show what is happening again and again. For example, contributions per house in the public sector stock in cash terms were as follows: £255 in 1980-81 and £80 in 1985-86. We all tend to use exaggerated language in the political debate, but one is entitled to say that that is a dramatic, almost catastrophic, decline. It is reflected in housing conditions which will seriously undermine the quality of life for thousands of Scottish people. I find it pathetic—I use that word with consideration—and sad that responsible authorities in areas like Glasgow state that they believe that as a result of these cuts it is likely that about 21,000 of their public sector stock could be classed as below the tolerable standard. The authorities are not proud of that, but it is forced upon them by Government policy.

We may well be faced with major clearances equivalent to the slum clearances of the past if we do not reverse the trend. Part of the essential preparation for the attack upon the housing problem is to establish accurately the scale of the problem, and that needs the type of survey that is asked for in the new clause.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman knows that there are various sorts of surveys. The schedule that he has tabled as an amendment says:

"The HCS shall provide information about the condition of all existing dwellings".

I want to establish whether that survey will cover all the houses in Scotland.

Mr. Dewar: I am well known to be a reasonable man—sometimes that is held against me as a criticism. If the Minister is saying that his opposition to the new clause is based upon that consideration, I say to him with full-hearted generosity that I am prepared to withdraw the clause—on the understanding that it will reappear in

another place in another form—if he says that he will accept, in principle, a house condition survey, but wants to discuss with COSLA a sample basis. I certainly would not stand on every line of the schedule. I think that the Minister is making something of a barrack room lawyer's point on this. I hope that he will not attack the clause simply on that basis. We should concentrate on the principle and see whether we can reach some sort of agreement.

8.15 pm

Whatever the arguments, one thing is clear. A new house condition survey would reveal that the present capital expenditure allowed for housing in Scotland is totally inadequate. This year the public sector housing revenue account is £389 million. It will increase to £449 million—I am relieved at that—but it will still fail hopelessly to meet the problems that we face. I commend a house condition survey because it would do something to puncture the complacency of Ministers. They seem to imagine that they are supplying sufficient money and are meeting the demands and needs of housing in Scotland.

I have a letter which is addressed to the Under-Secretary of State who is to reply to the debate. The letter, dated 4 May 1983, is from the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who was then the Minister with responsibility for housing. He said:

"There is already no real dispute as to the scale of this problem (dampness) and the public authorities already have the means to tackle it provided they give it high priority in their capital programmes and in housing management terms."

No one in Scotland believes that that is true.

The root of the fallacy is that we have not accurately quantified, by means of a housing survey, the amount of dampness that exists and the scale of the problem. If there was a house condition survey, we could perhaps blow away this rather feeble pretence that we could conquer dampness in Scotland if only local authorities could make minor adjustments in the ordering of their priorities. That is a deeply mistaken approach.

We want a house condition survey, and so do COSLA, Shelter and almost all local authorities, and I believe that many ordinary people in Scotland, when they listen to the argument, will want one too. The Under-Secretary of State himself once wanted such a survey. In March 1983 I spoke at a weekend school at St. Andrew's university. The Minister also addressed the school. I say openly that I do not remember the hon. Gentleman's speech on that occasion—it must have been insufficiently memorable—but fortunately other people have better memories than me. I have been told—I am satisfied that it is so—that at that weekend school the Under-Secretary of State specifically committed himself personally to support a house condition survey in Scotland.

A member of the audience, Mr. Breslin, wrote to the Minister on the 5 April 1983—I have the correspondence—and said:

"In replying to my question you stated that you would be in favour of a National Housing Condition Survey similar to that in England and Wales. I would, therefore, urge you to take all possible steps to enable such a survey to be carried out".

The Minister replied on 12 April:

"Dear Mr. Breslin, Thank you for your letter about a Scottish House Condition Survey. I will be raising this with the Minister".

There is no challenge to that account. It is clear that that recollection is correct and that early in 1983 the Minister supported a housing condition survey.

I say without malice that the Minister is entitled to put his principles in his pocket when in office. No doubt that is a great temptation. This may look like good House of Commons jousting, but it is a serious matter. The point I wish to make—the Minister will not dispute it, I hope—is that when he was on the Back Benches—I accept that when one is on the Back Benches one has the luxury of making up one's own mind, and I accept also that ministerial responsibility is a serious concept—he was in favour of a house condition survey. He stated that quite openly. Now he has apparently turned tail, and I think that he owes us an explanation.

Mr. Ancram: I make no secret of the fact that at that meeting, when asked that question, I said that I was in favour of a house condition survey on the same basis as the English one. I got in touch with my hon. Friend who was then the Minister with responsibility for housing. However, I realised that a sample size based on the English survey would have covered only 900 houses in Scotland. I realised also—although the hon. Gentleman does not realise this—that that would give no information of any sort which we did not already possess. For that reason, I began to ask what a national house condition survey could achieve.

Mr. Dewar: That is an extraordinarily implausible explanation and performance, but there we are, we have to live with such disappointments.

It is possible to look at a larger sample, and there are a number of ways of doing so. If the Minister is saying that the mechanical basis for carrying out a house condition survey would not transplant happily from England to Scotland, let us look for a Scottish basis for a Scottish solution. There is nothing wrong with that. The point is that the Minister, until he took office, was personally committed to that principle. I suspect that privately—I do not want to embarrass him by asking him to rend his clothing and wear sackcloth and ashes—he is still in favour of the principle. It is very sad that he retreated when he found himself at the portals of the Scottish Office.

This is an important issue. I believe that an argument of expediency lies behind the ministerial stance. It is very convenient not to have a house condition survey because it allows Ministers to dispute what may be obvious subjectively, but what is difficult to establish statistically without a survey. It allows Ministers to say that the scale of the crisis is not as it is painted by local authorities and that therefore they do not need to provide the finances that are obviously required.

The refusal to have a house condition survey is a symbol of the Government's indifference to the reality of what is happening in Scotland. It is ultimately irresponsible to hide the facts purely to justify, as a matter of expediency, policies which are based on prejudice and which do not serve the needs of the Scottish people.

Mr. Gregor MacKenzie (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I support the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) in favour of a housing conditions survey. I cannot understand why the Minister is so excited about this matter and is refusing a survey which would be useful to him.

Mr. Ancram: I am not excited.

Mr. MacKenzie: The Minister has given the impression of being excited, because he has been on his feet about three times in the past 15 minutes.

[Mr. MacKenzie]

Over the past few years we have had more interference from the Scottish Office in the affairs of local government than I can ever remember. Rate capping and other measures have been offensive to local authorities. If the Secretary of State and his Ministers are going to give guidance to local authorities on housing matters and interfere with them directly or indirectly with the rate support grant and housing support grant, they should have better information at their fingertips than they seem to have at present.

What troubles me is that Ministers tell us from time to time that there is no shortage of houses. That may well be arithmetically correct. I remember listening to a speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden some years ago. He said that arithmetically one could make an equation of the number of people needing houses and the houses that were still available, and they might work out to be equal, but that in Scotland there was a serious shortage of desirable private and public sector houses. My experience is that there is a considerable shortage of the up-to-date houses.

I became a member of Glasgow corporation in 1952. I hasten to add that I was a brash and youthful town councillor, but that was some years ago. When I went to my surgeries in those days there would be 30 or 40 people waiting to see whether they could get a roof over their heads. At that time a person had to be on Glasgow corporation's housing list for seven years before he or she would be considered for a house.

When I have my surgeries now I am not troubled to the same extent by people who are looking for a house. They are now looking to transfer out of the house that they already have. I am also speaking on behalf of a number of my colleagues because that is the experience that most of us have. People want to get out of houses that are damp or in a poor state of repair. They want to move to one of the higher amenity schemes in Glasgow and other places.

I have the pleasure of sharing the representation of the people of Castlemilk with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). We are constantly approached by constituents who point out the number of houses in the area which are boarded up because they have been destroyed or interfered with by vandals. They are boarded up because the local authority does not have the wherewithal to put the houses in a good and sufficient state of repair.

In Rutherglen—the older part of my constituency—I am approached by people who are worried about simple things such as rusting window frames. I have reports, as my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden said, of dampness. Dampness has been a constant complaint and much more should be done by central Government to assist local authorities to deal with the problem.

Last, but not least, local authority tenants complain to me about rewiring. In my constituency, the tenants were recently told that there was insufficient money to rewire their houses. The firemaster's representative had told some of them that their houses were a fire hazard, but the local authority was unable to rectify them because it did not have the wherewithal.

If the Secretary of State is serious about putting local authority houses in a good and proper state of repair and solving the problems of dampness and rewiring, I do not know how he will make a proper judgment of how to allocate the money if he does not have a survey of the kind suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden.

The right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) said that he was anxious about the private sector. So are we. I have never understood the present Administration's attitude towards providing assistance for repairs and renovations for private sector houses.

I have had the experience, as have many people, of being a public representative for some time. There is no doubt that middle-aged and elderly people in my constituency know where they want to go if they have a choice of a house in the centre of the town or of moving to a housing scheme on the outskirts of the town. In Rutherglen and Cambuslang people want to live as near to the centre of the town as they possibly can. There are stocks of older houses in what I suppose could be called a near-twilight zone. If money were spent on them, they could have another 20 or 30 years of useful life. People want to live in older houses in the centre of the town when they are middle-aged and elderly. We can see that from the rush there is for housing association houses.

If the Secretary of State and his representatives conducted a survey of some of those older private sector houses he would discover that they could be given a useful life longer than the one at present forecast if a little money were spent on them.

Most of us were brought up on the old proverb:

"A stitch in time saves nine"

With a little expenditure, we could give private sector houses a much longer life and we could give people what they want. The Secretary of State will never find out what they want unless he conducts a proper survey working with the local authorities, the housing associations and the people who are interested in this matter. I hope that the Secretary of State will reconsider the matter. He cannot make a proper judgment about the housing position in Scotland, either private or public, unless he has the information at his fingertips. Unless he has the information at his fingertips he cannot make a proper allocation of the resources. I hope that he will accept the amendment.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I find it incomprehensible that the Minister should refuse to grant the housing conditions survey which has been requested. If there is doubt about the condition of housing, even a sample of 900—small though it is—may help.

One of the things that the Government did which I found unacceptable at the time was the way they discontinued the housing plans which were supposed to be produced on a rolling basis by local authorities. One of the provisions of the housing legislation of the 1970s placed a duty on local authorities to assess the need for housing in their areas, to compile a plan and adjust it as necessary and, from time to time, to send a copy of it to the Scottish Office. No doubt the then Administration found that useful, because on the basis of the information provided by the housing plan they could look at the housing needs in Scotland, see which areas of the country perhaps needed special attention. They could look, in particular, at different housing types and perhaps see, by comparison with housing plans throughout the country, which local authorities were actively responding to the problems. The Scottish Office could also see what difficulties were emerging and could budget accordingly. I fully appreciate

that the housing plan might not have been sufficient to deal with the requirements contained in the new clause, because it seeks a more intensive look at housing conditions in Scotland.

8.30 pm

Briefly, I would like to point a finger at the Government and ask why they are not prepared to have a housing survey in Scotland whereas in other parts of the United Kingdom they are willing to do so.

Mr. Ancram: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to answer that when I come to that point in my speech. The hon. Gentleman has made a point which I think he must reconsider because he is basing his argument on what he thinks is the absence of housing plans. The housing plan system is still in force and we still receive housing plans.

Mr. Wilson: I remember serving in Committee on the Housing Bill which took away the statutory obligation on housing authorities to provide such plans and to make them available to Governments. I stand to be corrected if some later Housing Bill has changed the picture, but I do not think that it has. The Minister still has to face up to the question of why surveys have been granted by the Government for Northern Ireland, Wales and England but not for Scotland. I do not necessarily take the view that we should follow in the footsteps of England or any other part of the United Kingdom. However, I was struck by the fact that the Minister was using as his main prop the argument that in Scotland, pro rata to the English survey, there would be only some 900 houses contained in the sample. What is the condition which applies to Northern Ireland or Wales, which are both smaller countries than Scotland? We should put that to the Minister.

What have the Government to lose? If the Government maintain that the housing position in Scotland is good and improving, the housing survey will show that. If, as many others suspect, the condition of our houses is deteriorating, the housing survey will point to the need for more expenditure on the part of the Government. I think that that is the nub of the argument. The Government obviously would not wish to make money available in greater quantities towards housing. The leaflet of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities says:

"What has the Government done?"

That is an ominous sounding phrase. It goes on to say:

"The Government has drastically reduced the amount Councils are allowed to spend on housing each year."

Because the housing grant has been progressively cut back there are problems for local authorities in dealing with problems of modernisation, re-wiring, condensation, structural repairs and so on.

We all know from our constituency experience that in the last quarter of the financial year there are many more requests from constituents requiring repairs. They are frequently told, when they approach the housing division, that there is not enough money left in the kitty for that financial year. They are told to be patient and wait with their rotting windows and with the draught taking the icy winds of January, February and March into their houses. They are told to be patient and spring will come and perhaps some repairs will then be done to the house.

Mr. Henderson: Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that it will not be a housing condition survey which will fix those windows, it will be a joiner?

Mr. Wilson: I agree. That is indubitably the case. However, perhaps the housing condition survey will point out to the Government the need to supply additional money to local authorities with which to employ joiners and provide the window frames and other things which will be required. Joiners have to be paid, the material has to be bought and it is sometimes difficult for local authorities to budget.

A question mark is not just hanging over the public sector because, in the private sector, the drop in improvement grants from the 90 per cent. level has slowed down much of the modernisation work which was being carried out. I think that the Government are remiss there. I know that the increase in the improvement grant was put into effect six months, or perhaps just a little more, before the 1983 election and after the election the tap was turned off. No doubt, if we continue talking about this long enough and approach the 1987 election, or whenever it will be, the tap might be turned on again. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) is sitting there hoping that my analysis will prove correct.

Those grants were a good use of public money. One can see the changes which that couple of years of investment brought to the private sector. In the inner cities houses were cleaned externally and the inside of the houses were modernised and brought into better condition. However, we still have far too many slums.

Two things are particularly worrying. First, very few new houses are being built to house some of the people who are still living in the poorer private accommodation. Secondly, because of the lack of money for local authorities, some of the housing estates are sliding backwards in terms of maintenance and the surrounding environment. That is perhaps one reason why, as the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie) pointed out, many people go to see Members of Parliament and councillors for housing exchanges. They want to transfer up the market if it is possible. They want to move out of a poorer area into a better area. That is not an unnatural thing to want to do. It is not unnatural to want to improve one's environment. However, part of the problem is that there are probably too many schemes where there are difficulties, and too many houses which suffer from condensation.

We already have the equivalent of the housing conditions survey in the valuable work that was done by the Select Committee. The Committee pointed to the need to invest much more money in upgrading insulation and ventilation in many council houses now suffering from condensation. Unfortunately, in spite of that trenchant report, the money has not been made available. I hope that the Government will do something about that. Equally, I hope that they will agree to the housing condition survey because that will be added ammunition for the work that needs to be done.

I was speaking today to a Welsh Member of Parliament who was questioning me about this debate and expressing surprise that we did not have a housing condition survey.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): A new alliance.

Mr. Wilson: Indeed yes. The hon. Gentleman said it was very useful to have exchanges of information on a transnational basis.

Mr. Maxton: Multinational.

Mr. Wilson: Transnational. He said that the Welsh Office used the Welsh housing survey to obtain more money for housing purposes from the Treasury. I have come across a document which shows that the same applies in Northern Ireland.

For those reasons I hope that the Minister will consider holding such a survey. If he has nothing to hide he can go ahead. If he does have something to hide perhaps that is the reason why he refuses such a reasonable request this evening.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I hope that my hon. Friend on the Front Bench will look carefully at this new clause. I found it fascinating that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) drew attention to the work of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs. He and his right hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Ms. Stewart) refused to take any part in that Select Committee and left all the hard work to those willing Members of the Labour Party, the alliance and the Conservative party. Yet the hon. Gentleman confidently calls in aid the work of the Select Committee. It is true that it conducted an inquiry into dampness and condensation, and produced a good report. I would have thought that that report, coupled with information from local authorities about the conditions of their properties, would be sufficient to show that there is a need for something to be done. The Select Committee saw some appalling conditions, in which people should never be allowed to live. The report is there for anyone to read.

Mr. Maxton: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that he was one of the signatories of that unanimous report, and that it recommended that there should be a house condition survey?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman will realise that I did not support that particular aspect of the report. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Gentlemen looked again at my comments in Select Committee during evidence sessions, they would realise that I did not support that aspect. I do not support such a survey, not because such a survey would not be worth while, but because the evidence is already available. We know of the need for improvements. Local authorities have the evidence. My hon. Friend the Minister has the information and knows what needs to be done. A house condition survey will not tell us anything that we do not already know, and we need not bear its cost. It is more important to use available money sensibly and properly. Local authorities, for different reasons, have not made use of the funds available for dampness and condensation. The tragedy of that is borne by those who must live in the properties and tolerate the conditions.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I am pleased to see that there is something that the hon. Gentleman does not already know. I was a member of the Select Committee during the investigation, and I remember clearly the recommendation that there should be a proper house condition survey. The hon. Gentleman was also a member of the Select Committee, and still is—heaven help the Committee. I am not aware that he or any other hon. Member moved a minority report to suggest that there should not be such a survey. Why, then, is he now standing on his head?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman must be aware that that is not how the Select Committee has conducted its activities. When we have tried to do as the hon. Gentleman suggests, it has not helped the Committee. However he may consider my views on different matters, I have tried desperately hard with others to make it a working, meaningful Committee which is doing something worth while for Scotland. We often differ, properly, in our political views, but we should not differ on the importance of the Select Committee's work and the way it presents reports. At times all hon. Members must decide not to make a big issue of one aspect because other aspects of a report are important.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. Friend recall that the Select Committee did not commend a house condition survey but recommended that the Government might give further consideration to it?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend is right. I do not have the report before me. I did not want to quote from it because, without it, one is always in danger.

Mr. Maxton: Despite the hon. Gentleman's analysis of the Select Committee's work, does he agree that, once a report has been produced and agreed unanimously, whether he agrees with it all or not, it is up to each hon. Member not then to start saying that he disagrees with this bit and that bit, which only undermines the whole report?

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that some of his hon. Friends have disagreed with various reports and made their views clear, as I have done. That is how these things are.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will resist the temptation. Instead of conducting surveys, I would prefer the Government to persuade local authorities which could and should spend more money to rectify the problems.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber) *rose*——

Mr. Home Robertson: The hon. Gentleman should follow that, if he can.

8.45 pm

Sir Russell Johnston: I could not follow that in quite the same way.

The Minister keeps saying that he is willing to be convinced of the need for a house condition survey. Indeed, he spent a great deal of time saying that in Committee. I shall quote his words, which he will undoubtedly be happy to listen to—perhaps happier than listening to mine. He said:

"I said then, I said on Second Reading, and I say again today"——

that was quite a good start—

"that I have always been prepared to consider the case for such a survey. But being prepared to consider it and being convinced of its merits are two different things . . . I have considered it and the Department continues to keep the question under review."

Basically he is putting the onus on us to convince him that it is a proper step to take. However, the onus is also on him, especially at this late stage, to tell us clearly why it is that Scotland is so extraordinary different from England and Northern Ireland. What is it about Scottish housing that is unique and so different that such a survey is of no use to us, while it is useful for others?

Please will the Minister not give us the sampling argument, which has been well dealt with by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar)? All hon. Members accept that the English sample was so small that

it would be inappropriate for Scotland. It is equally true that the sample in Northern Ireland was of a different size, and there is no reason why the same cannot apply to Scotland.

The Minister has adduced two arguments in opposing the proposition. First he says that it will cost too much. In Committee he stated:

"Before committing the taxpayers' scarce resources to such an exercise I would want to be absolutely convinced that any additional or better information that it might provide would justify the costs . . . The convention's own estimate of the cost is up to £5 million. That would be £5 million which would not be spent on renovating local authority stock or on improvement grants. I was doing a calculation as to what that would mean on the ground. It would mean, for example, that some 1,540 council houses which would otherwise have been modernised would not be modernised." — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee* 11 February 1986; C. 527-8.]

That is not an entirely insubstantial argument. The Minister argues that it will cost a lot of money, so we must ensure that it is being usefully spent, especially as it could, theoretically be spent on something else.

I question whether if the money is not spent on a housing survey, bingo, it will be spent on maintenance grants and building more houses. It is not unreasonable to question that. Nevertheless, our original argument remains unanswered. Why is it that the funny people in England — indeed, some of them are — and Northern Ireland think that having access to the information justifies the cost of acquiring it? Why is it that voluntary organisations, such as Shelter and others who spend all their lives considering how best to provide housing, are 100 per cent. in favour of a survey? None is opposed to it, although they are surely well aware of the Minister's argument that it will cost £X and that £X will then not be available for something else.

Mr. Maxton: In Northern Ireland they believe that all the information is present and known as a result of the housing conditions survey and they are able to allocate extra resources for housing. That is the position in Northern Ireland.

Sir Russell Johnston: That point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) takes me easily to the Minister's second argument — that the information is already known.

The Minister said in quite a long speech on 11 February:

"Local authorities have a duty under the Housing Acts of 1966 and 1974 to consider housing conditions and needs in their areas and carry out surveys of inspection . . . Hon. Members have already referred to the fact that Glasgow district council is currently engaged on such an exercise."

The Minister substantiated his argument a little later by saying:

"Obviously a localised survey is more likely to be organised in such a way as to try to take account of the more localised aspect. I think that there is value in proceeding in that way." — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 11 February 1986, c. 530.]

That basically is the Minister's argument and he is nodding his head in argument with that. That argument confines itself exclusively to local authority housing and that point has already been made by other hon. Members. If the Minister wants to argue the point, I will certainly give way to him.

Mr. Ancram: I would not want the hon. Gentleman to proceed on a false premise. I understand that the survey which is being carried out in Glasgow is examining both public and private sector housing stock. The checklists which were returned to us were supposed to do the same.

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not claim to be a great expert in these matters, but the House does have the benefit of the knowledge of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), who is sitting with his feet up on the Dispatch Box. If I may quote his pellucid words from the Committee proceedings—

"The Minister did not answer at least two or three points"— that is putting it mildly—

"made to him by me and by COSLA. One is that the check list includes only local authority housing. He admitted that that is the major source of information. So 40 per cent. of all housing in Scotland is excluded from his statistics." — [*Official Report, First Scottish Standing Committee*, 11 February 1986; c. 531]

I assume that the hon. Member for Cathcart made that point because he had good information to support it. As the Minister did not go out of his way to contradict it, I assumed that the hon. Member for Cathcart was correct. However, just to cover the final possibility, even if in certain special circumstances Glasgow district council were making particular and special arrangements, is it not normal under the Local Government Acts of 1966 and 1974, to which the Minister referred earlier, to consider just one housing group?

Substantial information may be obtained about local council housing conditions from the surveys laid down by the acts of 1966 and 1974. Presumably, by aggregating the information, one can gain knowledge of the overall position. However, if the hon. Member for Cathcart and I are correct, and the survey does not include housing in the private sector, that makes it less easy for the Government to determine their policy for example on maintenance grants. As the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) said, the Government have switched on and switched off their policy of maintenance grants without any clear evidence of a concerted through policy.

In conclusion, I hope that, since the general range of voluntary organisations involved and interested in housing are in favour of such a survey, since the local authorities are in favour, since the Government's policy already operates surveys in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and as the hon. Member the Minister himself supported one when he was no more than an ordinary, humble Back Bencher——

Mr. Gordon Wilson: He was never humble.

Sir Russell Johnston: I submit to that correction— when he was an ordinary Back Bencher. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman should now demonstrate some of this open-mindedness which he has been vaunting and pay attention to what is being said. As the hon. Member for Garscadden said, if the words on the Order Paper are not quite right then their Lordships in another place should have more time than us to work out something more appropriate.

Mr. Jim Craigen (Glasgow, Maryhill): If the condition of Scotland's housing stock were as good as Ministers keep telling us, I do not see that the Minister should have any difficulty in accepting new clause 1. Of course, knowing the Minister as I do, I know that he believes in the advice of Emile Coué — if one says something often enough, one starts to believe it. The trouble is that nobody else believes Scottish Office Ministers when it comes to the bland assurances that we receive about the condition of Scottish housing.

[Mr. Jim Craigen]

The Government have singled out housing for some of the most severe cuts in public expenditure since they came into office. The Minister may look puzzled, but it frankly puzzles me why housing should have been singled out in this way. No other sector of public activity so intrudes on the environment in which we live and could make such a significant contribution to improving employment in the community while at the same time lifting the living standards of our communities.

Let us be blunt about this: much of Scottish housing, whether in the public or private sectors, looks pretty drab. Some of it is really unsatifactory. With a number of my colleagues today I met the Minister of State, Department of Health and Social Security about payments for the severe weather conditions. The Minister must accept the interlocking relationships between housing and heating difficulties in Scotland. The report of the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs on dampness brought out that point in a number of its studies and recommendations.

It might be argued that if we could improve the structure and the nature of Scottish housing we could reduce the size of heating bills. At the same time as giving people more comfort in their homes, we could actually create more employment in the community. The Minister may launch into yet another ideological hang-up over a public versus private housing opportunity. The last Labour Government encouraged and achieved a higher number of new-build houses in the private sector than the present Government have since coming into office in 1979. We do not need to take any lessons from the Government when it comes to supporting and encouraging the private housing sector.

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman, as a fair man, will recognise that many of the Scottish housing problems to which he has referred, problems that we all recognise as being severe, have been with us for a long time. It is surprising that these problems have suddenly come to the notice of the Labour party.

9 pm

Mr. Craigen: This Government have also been with us for a very long time—too long. I may be exceeded in my fairness only by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar). I recognise that some of the problems go back to Victorian times but I did not start making speeches on housing only after the Tories came into office in 1979. I was making speeches long before that, and the hon. Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Henderson) was not here for long then—a previous constituency got shot of him after six months. The electors in another constituency got rid of the Minister (Mr. Ancram) after six months as well.

I can understand why the Scottish Office has been rather resistant to proposals for a survey, because it would quantify the horrendous extent of the problem facing authorities in Scotland. It would also show that the private sector is also vulnerable. I know that a survey was done on inter-war housing in the private sector which showed that that sector will continue to be vulnerable in the foreseeable future. The Government's recent Green Paper on home improvements recognised the contribution that renovation of our old housing stock has made. What is required of the Minister this evening is an acceptance that that programme will keep abreast of the requirements that face Scottish housing in the foreseeable future.

We have a large Victorian heritage as well, and a number of houses constructed during that time have stood the test of time remarkably well—more so than some of the housing stock that was constructed in the 1960s and 1970s. The renovation programme carried out by both Labour and Conservative Governments has shown that one can give a fresh lease of life to these older properties at rather economic prices. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), with his Glasgow shrewdness, pointed out, people prefer renovated older houses to some of the post-war system built housing. There has been consumer preference for many of the older houses that have been brought up to modern standards.

There are many problems in my area that are perplexing the local authority — for example, the deck access schemes. There are police aspects as well, such as combating the incidence of crime and vandalism, all of which will incur considerable cost. The Minister and I served in Committee on the housing defects legislation. That measure benefited only those people who had taken the Government at their face value and purchased houses which they then found had structural faults that required either remedy or another home, because the problems were beyond repair. The Government may also have to recognise that certain system-built properties are beyond repair, and that it will be necessary for the Government to write off the debt charges rather than leave the housing authorities to face this burden.

Some other facts have emerged from the housing survey. The Minister should recognise what has been recognised by the housing authorities, that there will be a shortage of the necessary skills. I think my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) will agree that, when the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities came to lobby Members of Parliament during the time of housing support grant orders, Bailie Jim McLean, the chairman of Glasgow housing committee, said there would be a shortage of electricians and other skilled tradesmen, given certain levels of programming in the modernisation of houses.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Shocking.

Mr. Craigen: The loud voice of my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) comes across quite sharply.

That shortage of skilled tradesmen is typical of what is happening in the construction industry. We are wasting a lot of our skilled tradesmen.

I hope that the Government will accept the new clause. If it amounts to as little as the Minister in his interventions insisted that it did, he does not have much to be afraid of by accepting it. I do not support the new clause simply because I want to be information-rich about the problems of Scottish housing. Most of us who are dealing with constituents all the time look around our areas and are only too familiar with the problem of deteriorating housing stock. I hope that the Minister will bite the bullet by accepting the new clause and that he will recognise that there is a need for Scottish housing to get a bigger slice of the cake. It is the duty of Scottish Office Ministers to

argue with their colleagues responsible for other areas in the United Kingdom the case that Scottish housing deserves a bigger slice.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I support new clause 1. I want to put the record straight about the affairs of the Select Committee and the inquiry into damp housing. There were two reports, and the original report was never ratified by the Select Committee because, unfortunately, an election intervened. The original report was much stronger than the one that followed. It was a scathing indictment not only of the Government, but of local authorities of all political colours which for years concealed and masked the problems of their housing stock, because the problem was so huge that it would have become a massive national embarrassment. New members arrived in the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs and we had to water down the original report in order to get the new members, who were somewhat more extreme in their Right-wing views, to accept what was to be a consensus.

Mr. Henderson: On a point of order. Is it in order for an hon. Member to give a tendentious description of the deliberations of a Select Committee on a report that has never been published?

Mr. Speaker: If the report has not been published, the hon. Member should not disclose it. I think that what he said was a preamble to his speech.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) and I took part in the survey. I think he will agree that we were both disgusted and shocked by what we discovered. In the summary of conclusions and recommendations, at paragraph 84(4), the Committee said:

"The Committee is inclined to consider that a comprehensive centrally funded and organised survey of housing stock, as advocated by a majority of witnesses, would be justified in terms of practical benefit. We do not, however, consider the case conclusively proven".

That is what the Committee reported.

Mr. McKelvey: Of course that was the case. Nothing could have been conclusively proven because some members of the Committee had not heard the evidence. In natural justice, we could not have pushed the original report.

However, the evidence which was gathered and which appeared in the published report showed clearly that the vast majority of those from whom we heard evidence believed that such a survey would give the Government a clearer idea of the problems of public and private housing. That was most important because there had been no survey of private housing, and the survey undertaken by some local authorities provided inconclusive and incomplete evidence.

All the members of the Select Committee were horrified by the conditions in which some people lived, and we saw only a small proportion of bad housing. The extent of dampness was not fully known at the time. Some witnesses said that about £157 million would be needed immediately to redress the problem. So excited were the Government when we produced the evidence that they allowed £1 million or £2 million to stave off the worst publicity. That was a completely inadequate sum to deal with the problem, which still exists. It exists because we have not had a proper survey. However, authorities have now taken a much more serious attitude, are considering the matter and are telling the truth.

The evidence given to the Committee showed that some authorities had told their tenants who were living in abysmal, damp and unhealthy conditions that it was probably caused by heavy breathing at the top of the stairs and in some of the bedrooms. That may sound funny to some people, but it is not funny for those who live in council or private houses that are riddled and rotten with dampness, which affects not only their health but, more importantly, the health of their young children. We saw young children with serious chest infections caused by the damp penetration and mould.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) said that he does not know why the Government fear such a survey, but he knows very well why they fear it. Such a survey would prove beyond doubt the amount of money that must be injected into local government coffers to halt the extension of dampness in the horrible accommodation in which so many people must live, to redress the balance and to ensure that, in the future, we do not build the houses which cause such defects. The cost of curing the defects would be about £250 million, and that is exactly why the Government will not spend the small amount needed for the survey. It would be an indictment of their refusal to spend the money that would give all the people in Scotland who deserve proper and decent homes, whether in the public or private sectors, the opportunity to live in what we would consider decent and respectable housing. That is why the Minister will not accept new clause 1, and I say it is disgraceful.

Mr. Home Robertson: It is quite understandable that much of the debate has concentrated on the condition of housing in urban Scotland. Like the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) and my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), I was a member of the Select Committee which examined the condition of housing in Scotland and reported on dampness. We saw some truly revolting conditions in some of our urban stock, but I should not like the debate to be concluded without some reference to the condition of housing stock in rural Scotland.

In rural Scotland, we are talking principally about privately owned housing. The House should consider the matter every bit as much as urban housing. The Rural Forum organisation, which is made up of voluntary organisations concerned with rural social problems in Scotland, reported last year on the state of rural housing. It came up with some fairly alarming conclusions. Those of us who represent rural or semi-rural constituencies know that quite a lot of the housing stock there is in a pretty ropy condition.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

9.15 pm

Mr. Home Robertson: I am getting pretty bored with the hon. Member for Tayside, North.

I have taken quite an interest in the condition of agricultural tied housing in Scotland, in which people do not even have security of tenure. Too often, people are compelled to live in such houses, which are in the most appalling condition. They are damp and are effectively prisons. I pay tribute to Rural Forum for examining the

[Mr. Home Robertson]

condition of housing in rural Scotland and for making recommendations. The Conservative party has something to be ashamed of in that it has masked housing conditions all over Scotland. It is quite in character that it should resist the idea of preparing a proper house condition survey.

I should like to support my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) and others of my hon. Friends who have spoken in favour of the new clause, as it is important that we get to know the facts and the extent of the problem in all parts of Scotland. This is as much of a problem, an abuse and a scandal in rural Scotland as in urban Scotland. It is yet another example of the Conservative party betraying its traditional supporters in rural Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: We have had a wide-ranging and interesting debate on what started out as a debate on a house condition survey, but the nature of house condition surveys is broader than that.

Some hon. Members know that this issue was raised on Second Reading and was the subject of extensive debate in Committee. I have to tell the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that it is somewhat difficult fo me to get up about three weeks after a lengthy debate and say something very different from what I said in Committee. I thank him for making my speech in advance and hope that he will not mind hearing some of it again.

New clause 1 and amendment No. 14 represent an attempt to quantify more clearly the Opposition's objectives in introducing a statutory requirement for a house condition survey in Scotland. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other organisations and professional bodies have also expressed an interest in such a survey. I have discussed the matter with COSLA's housing committee.

Several assertions have been made. They keep coming back in wide-ranging terms and concern the Government's record of spending on housing in Scotland. On listening to the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Rutherglen (Mr. MacKenzie), the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and others, it would appear that the Government have slashed capital spending on housing in Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: Total housing expenditure?

Mr. Ancram: We are talking about the condition of housing. My understanding of the remarks that were made was that the structural condition of housing was due to the Government slashing capital expenditure on housing in Scotland.

Mr. Maxton: No.

Mr. Ancram: It is only fair to work on facts, not on the mythology put forward by Opposition Members. Large reductions — some 37 per cent. — were made in gross capital expenditure under the last Labour Government. There have been reductions of some 4 to 5 per cent. in real terms under us.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) who makes these assertions, among others, must allow me to make the opposite case.

The figures in real terms on the HRA and non-HRA blocks show that in 1978-79, the last year of the Labour Government, capital expenditure amounted to £416 million. In the coming year, 1986-87, under this Government the figure is £411 million in real terms. Although there has been a minor reduction in gross capital expenditure, it is minimal. When compared to the 37 per cent. reduction by the last Labour Government, it gives the lie to allegations that have been made by the hon. Gentleman.

After two years in which we have seen the allocations to the public sector in Scotland going up in total by 43 per cent., I find it hard to take from Opposition Members the allegation that the Government are not concerned about housing problems in Scotland and are not responding to them. At a time of public expenditure constraint, an increase of 43 per cent. is a remarkable achievement and underlines the concern of the Government about housing problems in Scotland.

Mr. Foulkes: Has the Minister seen the excellent article by Age Concern, Scotland, a well-respected organisation, which has taken figures from the Government's own Scottish commentary and Government expenditure plans and put them into 1983-84 prices so that they are in real terms? They show that in 1975-76 total capital spending was £1,200 million, and by 1979-80 it was still well over £1 billion — £1,066 million. By 1984-85, after progressive reductions, it was down to £546 million. In other words, the present Government cut it by half, while the previous Government maintained it just above the £1 billion level. Does the Minister challenge those figures, which Age Concern has produced from the Government's own statistics?

Mr. Ancram: I do not want to trespass on the debate on new clause 2. As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman will make certain representations on behalf of Age Concern, and I suspect that he will be saying again that the Government have not done enough.

I agree with Age Concern that we need to spend more to deal with the problems in Scotland housing stock. For that reason, in the last two years we have increased the HRA allocations by about 43 per cent. All that I can ask of Opposition Members who are accusing the Government of slashing expenditure in all directions is at least to recognise that. They do nothing for their own case by continually making assertions that capital expenditure is being cut.

The hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) raised the problem of condensation and dampness, and this is something that the Government take seriously. Local authorities' returns in 1985 put the cost of eliminating dampness and condensation at £372 million. They indicated plans to spend £214 million by 1991 on this aspect of their programme. As hon. Members know, we have enhanced the allocations made in the last two years to housing authorities with a supplement, not to deal with the problem of condensation and dampness, but to help local authorities to deal with it. This year that supplement at £20 million represents approximately half of most authorities' average planned annual expenditure

on condensation and dampness. That is firm evidence of the Government responding to the needs of housing in Scotland.

Mr. Craigen: Is the Minister satisfied, from the feedback that he is receiving from those local authorities, that the technical remedies for removing the incidence of dampness and condensation are effective?

Mr. Ancram: As the hon. Gentleman knows, work on condensation is being done in a number of areas, not least by the Building Research Establishment, to see how best the problem can be cured. Indeed, I think the hon. Gentleman knows of a special project recently started in Glasgow, to which I gave an endorsement, and which I believe will be an interesting example of how the problem can be dealt with.

Mr. McKelvey: The Minister says that the Government have provided almost £20 million in the first year to deal with a problem which we believe will cost about £500 million. Does the Minister know how much it costs the Government to look after those who are ill because they live in damp houses? Would it not have been better for the Government to seize the initiative and say to local authorities that they intend to spend £500 million on attempting to eradicate dampness?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is falling into the trap into which so many hon. Opposition Members fall. A short time ago he gave the figure of £250 million. I have told him that the local authorities say that they want £372 million, so the hon. Gentleman has now increased his figure to £500 million. It is precisely that type of dutch auction that makes the Opposition's case so difficult to sustain.

As the campaign for surveys has progressed, the potential benefits to be gained from it have been somewhat exaggerated. Some of the issues——

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Ancram: No, I must get on. I have given way on a number of occasions.

Mr. Clarke: My question relates to the point that the Minister has just made.

Mr. Ancram: When I have developed this point I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Some of the issues that were discussed in Committee went far beyond anything that a national survey would touch upon, far less quantify. More generally, any survey based on methods and sample proportions used in England would tell us nothing that we do not know already. That applies whether one looks at the 1981 sample of 9,000 houses in England, the equivalent of which in Scotland would have been 900, or whether one looks at the 28,000 houses proposed for 1986 in England, which would still give us only 2,800 houses in Scotland. Again, it would give us no information that we do not possess.

To take account of wide variations in housing types and conditions in different areas of Scotland, where there are great differences from area to area, a national survey would need a sample proportion several times larger than any of those that I have mentioned. Even then it would produce only national level results and would provide very little additional information. The large-scale survey proposed by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities would produce certain assessments, but they would be certain assessments only at district level where they are needed. It would be a quite unprecedented exercise in terms of organisation and execution, to say nothing of the cost.

There must be a balance between cost and the information that one eventually gets. The new schedule suggests that this proposal will seek to go even further. It was for that reason that I pressed the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). I shall now give way to him.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. He seems to be a little worried about the conflicting figures that he has received. I should like to help him. Does he accept that he is bound to get conflicting figures and different advice until there is a national house condition survey? That is what we are urging upon him.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman talks about a national house survey. When I was asked this question in 1983, I too thought that a national house survey was a magical way of producing all the information that we needed to know about every house. However, when one looks at what certain sample sizes produce, what the cost of different sample sizes is and what that money could be used for instead, the argument is different. I shall come to that.

Mr. Craigen: When we were debating the housing defects legislation and I made the point that each house would need to be examined, the Under-Secretary of State said that a survey would be sufficient.

Mr. Ancram: It is nostalgic to have the hon. Gentleman shaking his finger at me after the last six months with the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton). He obviously believes in this proposal. When I asked his hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden whether he was looking for a 100 per cent. survey—because he at least knows the costs that we might be talking about —he was realistic enough to understand that that could never happen. If the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) is suggesting that, he must think very carefully about is implications for housing expenditure in general in Scotland.

A substantial amount of information is already available from the housing plans and check lists compiled by local authorities and from other sources, such as the general house survey and the labour force survey. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was right to say that the information that comes from local authorities provides a sound and reasonable basis on which to proceed.

9.30 pm

I do not know where the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) gets his idea that the housing plans have been discontinued. They are required on a four-yearly cycle for all local authorities except Glasgow, for which they are required annually. I am sorry to have to continue to correct the premises upon which hon. Members have put forward arguments, but I must say to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochabar that I have a copy of the check list, which, under item 8, includes general needs, dwellings, and all tenures. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that would include the private sector as well as the public. On another sheet, when asking for returns for future

[Mr. Ancram]

programmes, the check list refers to the private sector. If the hon. Gentleman was arguing on the premise that the check list did not consider the private sector, he will understand that he was wrong.

Sir Russell Johnston: I know that the hon. Gentleman has had to deal with many interruptions, so I am grateful to him for giving way. Is he saying flatly that all the housing surveys under the 1966 and 1974 legislation include the private sector? If so, why not use local authorities as Government agents to achieve a national house survey?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is using the fact that he has heard the speech before to try to pre-empt me once again. Under the 1969 legislation, local authorities have a duty to identify houses below tolerable standard, which are assumed to be in the private sector. Obviously they must consider the private sector to complete their surveys.

The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber mentioned that I had referred to the Glasgow survey in my speech in Committee. That survey is considering 15,724 cases. The sub-sample is considering 2,700 under the Glasgow district council, 258 Scottish Housing Association and 1,157 private cases. That shows that the survey is considering stock across the board.

In addition, we have had the benefit of various ad hoc surveys into specific problems. In recent years these have included the private sector survey on inter-war stock and the report on the impact on housing improvement and repair grants. Reference has been made to the inquiry into the condition of local authority stock carried out in England last year. One source of information available in Scotland is the annual housing check lists, which are completed and compiled by local authorities and which reflect local authorities, views of their stock.

Glasgow district council has taken the matter seriously. It is currently engaged on a survey for that purpose. By doing such surveys, local authorities improve their knowledge of their stock. They are better placed to assess housing needs in their areas, to draw up better check lists and housing plans and to establish priorities for improvement and repair projects. Local authorities might consider more closely their powers and responsibilities in that area.

The Northern Ireland survey on which the hon. Member for Cathcart is so keen, is undertaken by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is the housing authority for the Province. There is something to be said for housing authorities considering closely what Glasgow is doing.

I have considered the representations made by COSLA and I have listened carefully to the arguments in the debate and previous debates. I remain unconvinced of the cost effectiveness of a national house condition survey in Scotland. I believe that the present practice is more suited to Scottish circumstances and more cost effective, in that resources can be devoted to work on the stock. The convention's estimate of the cost of a 56,000 sample survey—only 2·5 per cent. of the total Scottish housing stock—was up to £5 million. That sum of money could be devoted to the modernisation of 1,500 council houses or, in answer to the right hon. Member for Rutherglen, to the payment of about 1,000 improvement grants. I do not believe that a survey of only 2·5 per cent. of existing housing stock would give us information that we do not already obtain from various other surveys.

I remain prepared to consider the case for a house condition survey in the light of the prevailing circumstances. The new clause and amendment are not only wrong, but unnecessary. No legislative provision is required to enable a house condition survey to be undertaken at any appropriate time or in any particular way. The terms of the proposal, especially the detailed requirements in the new schedule, are wholly unacceptable and would give rise to significant difficulties and cost in implementation. I ask the hon. Member for Garscadden to consider withdrawing the motion. Failing that, I shall obviously have to ask my colleagues to reject it.

Mr. Maxton: I can make a short speech if the Under-Secretary of State is prepared to agree to two things which I thought he was conceding. First, I hope that he will allow each local authority to do as Glasgow has done and carry out a survey of its own housing, and that he will be prepared to finance them with extra money to carry it out. Secondly, I hope he will ensure that each local authority carries out exactly the same survey. There is no point in one local authority carrying out a survey with certain standards and another carrying out a different survey with different standards. If the Under-Secretary of State is prepared even to nod and say that he is prepared to do that, I shall ask my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to withdraw the motion, I shall sit down and we will not have to vote.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman has made a number of assertions about check lists. He should look at a copy of a check list and see how detailed is the questionnaire that must be filled in.

Mr. Maxton: I accept that point, but that is not what the local authorities say about the check lists. They make a totally different point. Obviously the hon. Gentleman is not going to respond. I am sorry, but my speech will therefore have to be slightly longer.

Last Friday I attended a conference organised by the Planning Exchange, at which the Scottish Office was represented. The conference was about the Green Paper on improvement grants. Every organisation represented, including Shelter and COSLA and the local authorities, the building federation, the surveyors and the environmental officers, said that a house condition survey in Scotland was needed. The Under-Secretary of State is the only person who seems to disagree—I am not sure that his advisers disagree—but even he did not disagree in 1983. He said that he was convinced by what was said by the then Under-Secretary of State for Scotland with responsibility for home affairs and the environment—the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart).

In a letter to Mr. Breslin — written on Scottish Conservative party paper, not House of Commons notepaper—he stated:

"As you will see, he"—

referring to the hon. Member for Eastwood—

"does not really feel that it is necessary to await a survey before tackling the problems of dampness in housing. I hope you will find his letter helpful, and I would welcome your comments."

At no point did the hon. Gentleman say that he agreed with the Minister.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): By implication.

Mr. Maxton: That is not by implication. The implication is that the hon. Member for Eastwood believed that there should be a survey. Of course, that would take place after the problems of dampness had been solved.

He is stating only one of the problems. The fact is that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ancram) said that he was in favour of a survey and did not disagree with it. It was only when he attained office that the Minister decided that he did not want it.

COSLA has issued figures, if the Minister will allow me to list them, showing that 332,900 houses need modernising, 118,200 need rewiring, 314,000 suffer from dampness or condensation and 50,000 need major or structural repairs.

The Minister contests these figures——

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose——*

Mr. Maxton: If the hon. Lady will allow me to carry on for a moment further.

The Minister has said that the figures are incorrect. COSLA has said——

Mrs. McCurley *rose——*

Hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Maxton: As far as I am aware, the hon. Lady has only just come into the Chamber.

Mr. Foulkes: She has been at dinner all night.

Mr. Maxton: COSLA obtained those figures and facts from answers *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will not allow arguments across the Chamber.

Mr. Maxton: COSLA obtained those facts from an answer given by the Minister to a question put down by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen). That is where COSLA obtained the facts. Where does the Minister obtain his facts? He obtains them from the local authorities. If the facts are wrong, the local authorities are not providing the right information. Every organisation which has provided information, which the Minister says is adequate, has said that what it is asked to provide is inadequate.

The local authorities and COSLA think that the information is inadequate. Why is the Minister the only one who thinks that the information that they provide is adequate? It seems an odd thing.

Mrs. McCurley *rose——*

Mr. Henderson: It seems to me that it ill becomes COSLA to highlight these figures, which are to a degree an indictment of the inadequacy of local authorities to look after the housing stock in years gone by, indeed when the Labour Government were in office. Is it not the case that local authorities have always had a duty to look after their housing stock both in the public and in the private sector? They should have done this over the years.

Mr. Maxton: These figures are a searing indictment of the Government's housing policy over the past seven years.

Mrs. McCurley *rose——*

Sir Russell Johnston: Give way.

Mr. Maxton: I am sure the hon. Gentleman will allow me to reply to one point before I give way to another Conservative Member.

Despite what the Minister has said, the Government have halved housing expenditure in Scotland. Despite the fancy terms, the total money the Government spend in Scotland is half what it was in 1979-80. That is why there is such disrepair and dampness in our housing. A large number of people who are unemployed cannot afford to pay their heating bills and that has also worsened the dampness problem. I give way.

Mrs. McCurley: If all the local authorities have the statistics which the hon. Gentleman has given us tonight, what is the need for a housing survey? We know the facts, we know the problems, and we are now attempting to deal with them.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Lady should have been here earlier.

Mr. Maxton: I agree with my hon. Friend. If the hon. Lady had been in the Chamber for the whole of the debate, she might have heard the arguments put forward for a housing condition survey.

There is a major row between the Minister and COSLA over these figures. If the Minister believes those figures are wrong, the best way to solve the disagreement is to have a housing condition survey. We would then know what the facts are and whether the Minister is right.

The Minister is gravely concerned about the costs. He says that a survey is not necessary and the local authorities can do all this themselves. If that is the case, why has the Secretary of State — or may be it was the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland with responsibility for Home Affairs, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart)—instructed each local authority to carry out a survey of school buildings? Why is it right for there to be a survey of all school buildings—not just a sample—at the moment, carried out by local authorities with money provided by the Government with a clear commitment that once the information about school buildings has been received the Scottish Education Department will be prepared to consider special programmes?

Mr. Rifkind: It is 100 per cent. though.

9.45 pm

Mr. Maxton: Apparently it is 100 per cent. I am not asking that. Perhaps the Secretary of State would like to read the new clause. That might be of value to him. Every organisation involved with housing, every expert, every local authority, every surveying organisation, every building organisation seek a house condition survey. Ministers responsible for housing in England believe a house condition survey to be right. The Northern Ireland Minister responsible for housing believes it to be right. What is it about the Secretary of State for Scotland which makes him say that it is unnecessary for Scotland?

The Government are rightly ashamed of their housing policy in Scotland. They know that housing conditions are appalling. They do not want the facts to be known. I ask my hon. Friends to vote for the new clause.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 93, Noes 150.

Division No. 89] **[9.46 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Barnett, Guy
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Craigen, J. M.
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Richardson, Ms Jo
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fletcher, Alexander
Galley, Roy
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayward, Robert
Henderson, Barry
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hirst, Michael
Howard, Michael
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Lang, Ian
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Phillip
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Francis Maude and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned — *[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered tomorrow.

COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 69(6) (Second Reading Committees), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

COMMONWEALTH DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION BILL *[Lords]* [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Commonwealth Development Corporation Bill *[Lords]*, it is

expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of any sums required by the Secretary of State for making grants to the Corporation or fulfilling guarantees given in respect of money borrowed by the Corporation's subsidiaries; and

(b) the payment into the Consolidated Fund of any sums paid to the Secretary of State in or towards repayment of sums issued in fulfilment of such guarantees.—*[Mr. Raison.]*

CIVIL PROTECTION IN PEACETIME BILL
[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Civil Protection in Peacetime Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Waddington.]*

CONSUMER SAFETY (AMENDMENT) BILL
[Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Consumer Safety (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Michael Howard.]*

STANDING ORDERS (ESTIMATES)

Ordered,

That the several Amendments to the Standing Orders relating to Public Business hereinafter stated in the Schedule be made:

Schedule

Standing Order No. 19 (Consideration of estimates):

Line 3, at end, insert 'set down under the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 101 (Liaison Committee); and not more than one day so allotted may be taken in the form of two half days, not being Fridays.'

Line 10, leave out from 'concluded' to end of line 64 and add—

'(3) On any such half day—

(a) proceedings on consideration of estimates or reports of the Liaison Committee relating thereto, standing as first business, shall be interrupted at seven o'clock; or

(b) notwithstanding the provisions of paragraph (2) of this order, consideration of estimates or reports of the Liaison Committee relating thereto may be set down for consideration at seven o'clock and shall be entered upon at that time:

Provided that on days on which business stands over until seven o'clock under the provisions of Standing Order No. 10 (Adjournment on specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration) or has been set down for that hour under the provisions of Standing Order No. 7 (Time for taking private business) proceedings under this sub-paragraph shall not be entered upon until such business has been disposed of, and may then be proceeded with for three hours, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 1 (Sittings of the House).

(4) on any day or half day allotted under this order, questions necessary to dispose of proceedings (other than a dilatory motion) on the estimates on which debate has been concluded shall be deferred until the hour prescribed under paragraph (5) of this order.

(5) At ten o'clock on an allotted day or half day, or as soon thereafter as proceedings under the proviso to paragraph (3)*(b)* of this order have been disposed of, Mr. Speaker shall put, successively, any questions deferred under paragraph (4) of this order, and any questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on all other estimates appointed for consideration on that day.'

Line 64, at end add new Standing Order (Questions on voting of estimates, &c.):

(1) On any day to which the provisions of paragraphs (2), (3) or (4) of this order apply Mr. Speaker shall at ten o'clock put the questions on—

(a) any outstanding vote relating to numbers for defence services for the coming financial year;

(b) the total amount outstanding in respect of each financial year to be granted out of the Consolidated Fund for the purposes defined in the relate[d] votes.

(2) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this order shall apply on a day not later than 6th February, if any of the following total amounts have been put down for consideration:

(a) votes on account for the coming financial year;

(b) supplementary estimates for the current financial year which have been presented at least seven clear days previously.

(3) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this order shall apply on a day not later than 18th March, if any of the following numbers or total amounts have been put down for consideration:

(a) votes relating to numbers for defence services for the coming financial year;

(b) supplementary estimates for the current financial year which have been presented at least seven clear days previously;

(c) excess votes, provided that the Committee of Public Accounts has reported that it sees no objection to the sums necessary being provided by excess vote.

(4) The provisions of paragraph (1) of this order shall apply on a day not later than 5th August, if the total amount of estimates which are still outstanding has been put down for consideration.

(5) At least two days' notice shall be given of the votes which are to be put down for consideration under paragraphs (2), (3) or (4) of this order.

(6) The provisions of this order shall not apply to any vote of credit or votes for supplementary or additional estimates for war expenditure.

Standing Order No. 101 (Liaison Committee):

Line 12, after 'day', insert 'or half day which may be'.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Kevin Capenhurst

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

10 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I am happy to have the opportunity to raise on the adjournment the tragic case of my constituent, Kevin Capenhurst, aged 17. Kevin Capenhurst was suffering from terminal cancer while imprisoned in the Glen Parva young offenders' centre. He was released only after I had made a series of representations to the Government. Were it not for the intervention in particular of the *Leicester Mercury*, which informed me of Kevin's case, Kevin would no doubt have died in prison, as the system does not ensure that the Ministers responsible for prisons and young offenders are informed in good time when inmates are suffering from terminal illness. The result is that Ministers do not take steps to obtain the release of such people.

The system's lack of compassion and its inhumanity applies whether the House and the Government are dealing with a 17-year-old youngster or a much older person. I submit that, where it is known that someone in detention will shortly die, to keep that person away from the dignity and decency of a death in freedom lacks kindness, compassion and common sense.

Kevin Capenhurst was the victim of the kind of life with which society has not learnt to cope. He came from a frequently broken home which lacked the stability enjoyed by most people. Kevin spent much of his childhood and youth in a series of institutions where good people tried to care for him, without great success. He emerged into adolescence as a young criminal who was sentenced for a series of crimes, some of which involved violence. Kevin ended up at Glen Parva convicted of mugging. He was a tough, difficult young offender.

After Kevin had been in Glen Parva for some months he complained that he was ill. His mother told me that she received letters from Kevin in which he complained that his symptoms were treated as if he was skiving and that he did not receive prompt attention. In due course, his illness was diagnosed as a rare form of terminal cancer. Instead of being referred at once to the Minister in charge of prisons, his case was not dealt with adequately or at all and only reached the attention of the Minister through me.

I pay tribute, as I have done before, to the speed with which Lord Glenarthur, the Minister then concerned, stepped in. Lord Glenarthur telephoned and gave instructions while on holiday, saw me at short notice and assessed whether it would be safe for this young man to be out of prison. When he was satisfied that it would be safe and that Kevin had somewhere to go, he ensured his release.

Once the Minister took note, he also took steps. My complaint is that there is apparently no efficient system to deal with such cases; there was no system; and nothing so far as I know has been done since Kevin's death to ensure that a system will be created. What are Her Majesty's Government proposing to do to prevent others from dying in prison when they should be released, whatever their age may be? What lessons, if any, have been learnt from the death of this young man?

As a result of Kevin's release, he was able to spend several months in freedom. He was treated in the Leicester royal infirmary with great kindness and care. He went to Lourdes by ambulance and told me how thrilled he had been to be wheeled around in his bed to the grotto. He said, "I have at least achieved something in my life."

Before he died, Kevin was admitted by the Leicester Organisation for the Relief of Suffering, known locally as LOROS, into the new hospice, which had not existed when Kevin was first diagnosed as terminally ill. I pay my public tribute to the people whose devotion has created this hospice, and to those who work in it. It has made a vast difference to the dignity of the life of Leicester people. I also pay tribute to the nuns who run St. Joseph's hospice in London, who were prepared to take, look after and love Kevin in his last days. There are not enough of such institutions.

Unfortunately, the matter does not end there. I wish to use this opportunity to bring to the Government's attention what happens and what happened in the medical section of Glen Parva. I went to see Kevin on Thursday 8 August last year. I was accompanied by two of my assistants, Martin Hutchings and David Metzgero. I say that because of their corroboration of what occurred. We were to see the forensic psychiatrist who was in attendance and who said that chemotherapy was essential but Kevin was refusing to continue with it and that he had a major obstruction—a primary tumour—which needed removal, but he would not agree to the operation. I asked why, and the doctor said that he thought that it was because, perhaps, he thought that if his condition deteriorated his prospects of release would be greater. I asked whether, in those circumstances the doctor would wish me to speak to the boy about it, and he said, "Yes, that would be a good idea."

I went upstairs, where I was shown into a lounge. Kevin was brought in looking very thin, but bright and uncomplaining. A prison officer in the corridor stared at us through the glass throughout the entire interview. That was not for our protection, because the boy could not have knocked down a nine pin, never mind us, but an act of discourtesy that we very much resented.

I told Kevin about the operation and he asked about it. I convinced him that he should accept the advice that he had been given. He told me of the awful side effects of chemotherapy but denied having refused it. He told me that he had never refused an operation, but, in the circumstances that I have described, he would welcome it if it would extend his life. I then had a similar conversation with his mother outside, explaining the need for the operation.

The House will be shocked as I was to learn, as I did from the doctor to whom I spoke at the Leicester royal infirmary, that at the date when I was requested to speak to the boy and ask him to undergo, by agreement, an operation, he was inoperable, and the prison authorities had been informed that he was inoperable. This is one of the most callous and unkind events that I have come across in my public life. It also did much to remove some of the confidence that this lad ought to have had in his Member of Parliament. I was asked to persuade him to have an operation when he was inoperable, although in any event he said he had been and was prepared to have it.

Eventually, the head of the prison medical service attended a meeting with the Minister and Mr. Hutchings in the Minister's office and various excuses were made, none of which I accept. There is no excuse. There ought

to have been an apology and the Minister should provide one, along with an explanation and the assurance that such things will not be permitted to recur.

I wish that this House did not have to deal with cases like Kevin's, but this place in its glory looks after individuals and their families and hon. Members who care are enabled through Adjournment debates to raise cases that concern individuals. Kevin's case goes much further than his individual problem, because it reflects on the failure of society to cope, and because it throws into sharp relief a system that is wicked and ought to be changed. It is a system in which dying people, however much harm they have caused, are not permitted out of prison when it is safe for them to be out. Kevin was released only after the intervention of his Member of Parliament. I thank again the *Leicester Mercury* and Mr. Laurie Simpkin for his help in the campaign to have Kevin released.

After three months, Kevin died. I visited him often in the LOROS hospice and it was amazing to see that he almost a skeleton, was capable of living. This boy whose life had been a misery and who had caused unhappiness to many other people never complained during his last three months. He never argued but accepted what he knew was to come and nothing became him more in life than his way of passing from it. I salute the courage with which he faced the end of his life and with which he bore his pain and his tragedy. I hope that his life and his death will be used as an example, and that the Minister and his colleagues will be encouraged, for the sake of all of us who cared about him, to take to heart at least some of the lessons to be learnt from that life and death.

10.13 pm

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): It is sad that tonight we should be debating the case of a young man who was only 17 when he died last October. Unfortunately, people sometimes die of illness when in prison, and, although there are arrangements for the early release of prisoners or detainees who are terminally ill, there are bound to be cases where people die suddenly before such arrangements are put into effect.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) asks what is being done to prevent others from dying in prison. The answer has to be that no steps can be taken to prevent entirely the possibility of people dying in prison. Before a convicted person can be released early on grounds of illness, the Home Secretary has to recommend to Her Majesty that action be taken through exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy to relieve him of the effects, or part of the effects, of his conviction: and it was under the power that on 21 August 1985 Kevin Capenhurst was released early from his sentence of three and half years' detention, which had been imposed on him as recently as 25 January last year.

The prison standing orders set out the circumstances under which the medical officer of a prison should present the case for consideration for early release; and when he is of the opinion that the illness of a prisoner is likely to result in his death within a brief period, or that he is likely to be bedridden or incapacitated until his earliest date of release, he is required to submit a report to the directorate of prison medical services and to officials in the criminal department of the Home Office. The medical officer should also be of the opinion that the prisoner's illness or physical condition means that risk of further offending is past, and he must be sure that he is in a fit state to be moved.

In deciding whether to make a recommendation to Her Majesty, the Home Secretary must also take account of such matters as the nature of the offence or offences, the criminal record of the prisoner, the length of the sentence and the time left to serve.

When a prisoner benefits from this exercise of the royal prerogative, he is free from all the consequences of his offence, and free from the control of the prison authorities. But there is no question of terminally ill prisoners being released to fend for themselves. In all cases, every effort is made to ensure that there are proper arrangements for a person's care. We make sure that he has relatives or friends who will be able and willing to take care of him on release, or we ensure that he is discharged to the care of a hospital or other suitable place such as a hostel or hospice.

It is true that Capenhurst was not released until after the hon. and learned Gentleman had taken an interest in the case, but I must make it absolutely plain that the question whether Capenhurst should be granted early release was already under consideration in the last week of July, before the hon. and learned Gentleman came on the scene. Inquiries were in hand to establish what arrangements could be made for Capenhurst's care in the event of his release. They included inquiries as to his home circumstances, but it was always envisaged that he might have to return to Leicester royal infirmary, which is what happened, before he went to the hospice.

Of course, a decision on whether a person should be released may be difficult to make. Even if someone is fatally ill, it may be very difficult for doctors to make a firm prognosis until death is fairly close. The hon. and learned Gentleman made a sweeping statement, which ignored entirely the obvious difficulty, when he said that it lacked common sense to keep someone in prison who was likely to die.

However, that does not mean that, as a matter of policy, people are not released early until they have but a few days or weeks to live. Cases are considered and prisoners released early even where the life expectancy may be many months. Each case is considered on its merits. All the criteria I have listed must be considered together. In different cases, different factors may be of significance. Thus it may be necessary to pay special attention to the nature of the offences and the risk of further offending.

Although cases where a dying prisoner is released early are not frequent, they are not especially rare or unusual. There are about five or six a year. So our practices are well tested and seem to have worked well in the past, with deserving cases not being ignored or passed over. They also seem to have worked properly and been applied sympathetically in the case of Kevin Capenhurst, in that when a firm prognosis as to his life expectancy was given, his release was immediately authorised. Of course, the future looked bleak from the time of the young man's operation, but it was a rare form of cancer—especially rare for such a young man. His life expectancy was clearly extremely difficult to judge. All that Dr. Phipps at the infirmary could say at the end of July was that Capenhurst was unlikely to live for more than two years. Even so, by that time, the case was under consideration with a view to his early release.

[Mr. David Waddington]

I ought to say something about the hon. and learned Member's dealings with the senior medical officer at Glen Parva. There was a misunderstanding between the hospital and the medical officer, who understood a letter from the consultant radiotherapist to mean that further operation was not possible because of difficulty in persuading Kevin Capenhurst to accept treatment. I am sorry that that resulted in the hon. and learned Gentleman suggesting to Capenhurst that he should undergo an operation which was not medically possible at that time. I do not believe, however, that that misunderstanding, although unfortunate and distressing, shows a general problem with communication between medical professions in the prison service and the National Health Service. Nor do I think that it shows that, in this case, there was a complete failure of communication. There was a misunderstanding about what was meant in the letter from the hospital.

As to our procedures and practices, they were last reviewed as recently as 1979. Even so, we have taken the opportunity to re-examine them. Although I do not believe that this case has shown up any serious deficiencies, we will make some small modifications to improve and speed up consultation and consideration. For example, we will ensure that Home Office cases which are clearly urgent are marked as such. We will emphasise the need to exercise judgments as quickly and humanely as possible. We are also considering whether advice to the prison authorities may be clarified and improved and whether there might be a need to remind medical officers from time to time of the existence of guidance.

Bearing in mind the number of these cases, prison authorities and their medical officers do not always have frequent experience of them. Their first concern as medical practitioners is the care and treatment of a patient. We will also conduct a review of potential cases by examining a sample, which will include all prisoners who are identified as seriously rather than terminally ill, to confirm that merit-worthy cases for early release are not inadvertently overlooked.

I am confident that our practices are not deficient, but I am glad to have had the opportunity to listen to the hon. and learned Member's views in the light of his experience with this case.

Mr. Janner: I thank the Minister for giving way and for what I regard as potentially substantial modifications in procedure. Do the changes include notification of the Minister about those who are diagnosed as suffering from a terminal illness?

The Minister has said throughout that consideration was given and will be given, but he has not said by whom. When a person is dying while effectively in the protection of the Home Office, the Minister should be informed. The matter should not be left to a prison medical officer or even to the prison medical service. It should go to those who are elected and who are answerable to the House.

Mr. Waddington: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, I do not have the day-to-day handling of these cases. This much at least is clear in my mind. There must be rules and instructions as to when the medical officer in a prison recommends that a person be released.

I have summarised the sort of criteria that have to be applied by the prison medical officer. That is the first stage. There have to be rules telling the medical officer when he should refer. When he refers, he is referring the case out of the prison to the Home Office. As to whether a case when referred to the Home Office comes straight on to the Minister's desk, I am not qualified to say. The hon. and learned Gentleman will realise my difficulty. I will check with my noble Friend and ask him to reply by letter to the hon. and learned Gentleman. I do not want to find that I have been in error, although I think I know what happens in these cases. I have had the opportunity of looking at the instructions and practices which are carried out. I do not think there is any evidence that they are deficient.

This has been an interesting debate. It has given me the opportunity of pointing out that certain changes have taken place, although they are not of a major sort. It gives me the opportunity to thank the hon. and learned Gentleman not only for having raised the case but also for having taken a close interest in the welfare of this young man and for having gone to a great deal of trouble to ensure that he could go into a hospice when he was moved from a hospital in Leicester.

It is appropriate that I should end my remarks by voicing my thanks to the learned and hon. Gentleman, but I think that I have also, in a friendly and co-operative spirit, rebutted some of the rather exaggerated criticisms that he made.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-six minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 28 February 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Arts (Business Sponsorship)

9.34 am

Sir William van Straubenzee (Wokingham): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the growth in business sponsorship of the arts and believes that everything possible should be done to encourage arts bodies to market themselves more effectively.

I am grateful that the accident of chance of the ballot has allowed me to raise this comparatively narrow, but very important, aspect of the arts expenditure and arts support. I am delighted to see other hon. Members on both sides of the House present today who I know have interests in these matters and who I trust will be successful in catching your eye, Mr. Speaker.

This is an appropriate moment to say something about the sponsorship aspect of arts support, timed as it is shortly before my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer presents his Budget. We can now look back and examine what has been achieved and also examine what some of us hope we shall achieve in future.

We should at the outset estabilsh that we are talking about a very considerable success story. I intend to be reasonably brief today, but I shall later re-emphasise that I have never considered, and do not know anyone who considers, that business sponsorship of the arts is a substitute for direct or indirect Government support. I have always regarded business sponsorship as an additional assistance. Nevertheless, such sponsorship has grown significantly in recent years.

Business sponsorship of the arts in 1975 was about £500,000 and it is currently running at the rate of £20 million. That is a very substantial increase. We should start by congratulating all those involved in sponsorship and those who have contributed towards it. It is evident that we work from a base of considerable success.

No one is suggesting that business sponsorship is a replacement for official funding. I have no doubt that hon. Members read an interesting edition of *The House Magazine* which appeared on 14 February. Sir Roy Strong, the distinguised director of the Victoria and Albert museum, had some penetrating comments to make about business sponsorship. He reminds us in the article that he speaks with some authority as the longest serving national museum director of this century as he has had 20 years in office and a decade still to go—modesty has never been one of Sir Roy's vices. He continued in the article to state:

"There is no doubt that we must look to plural funding and that those refusing to do so are only piling up misery for their successors. Our basic existence will continue, of course, to be secured by government but growth and development will have to spring henceforth from sponsorship, the realisation of our commercial potential and persuading our visitors to dig even deeper into their pockets. The financial swing has certainly sharpened our focus."

I believe that he is right. He draws attention to the dual nature of the funding. I wish to make it clear that, although the motion refers to business sponsorship, I continue to attach immense importance to direct and indirect Government sponsorship of the arts. There are times when people feel that Government money, which, after all, is taxation in one form or another, spent on the arts is spent on something that is snooty, distinct and detached from the ordinary person.

We should remind ourselves, for example—I shall not give a long list of statistics because they bore—that 5 million more people a year go to the theatre than to football matches. The theatre is not an activity confined to the rich, the cultured and the terribly upper crust. It is an activity widely enjoyed by increasing numbers of people. Our theatre is something of which both sides of the House can be immensely proud. At the moment it is a growth industry. Hon. Members will have read accounts of the recent reopening of a theatre because of the demand for it in London. I am sure that all hon. Members have had experience similar to mine. When we are delighted to entertain foreign visitors, in particular those whose mastery of the English language is good, one of the first things they wish to do during their visit to London is to enjoy the immense range of our theatrical offerings. Without being unduly superior, may I say that, conversely, when one is privileged to visit some other capital or great city, one is struck by the comparative paucity of the theatrical provision.

Let us establish, as is unquestionably right—not with great columns of figures—that since 1978-80 there has been an increase in real terms in Government support for the arts. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister, whose presence I appreciate, will be able to add to that. Although it has happened only recently, I should like to say what enormous pleasure all those who admire his work have obtained from his recent elevation to membership of the Privy Council. It is a fit and proper recognition of his work.

It is not easy to make direct comparisons because of the forthcoming abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. I see the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who no doubt will refer to that aspect of the matter if he catches your eye, Mr. Speaker.

The Select Committee of which I have the privilege to be Chairman studied that matter. It is remarkable that on an issue which arouses, understandably, such passionate feelings both ways—the abolition of those authorities—it was possible for a Select Committee, of course drawn from all parties, unanimously to agree upon a report, without a vote, about the effect on the arts of the abolition of those great authorities.

I recommend to my right hon. Friend the ideas contained in that report. They combine the stick and the carrot in terms of support from the authorities which will have the responsibility in the future. Comparison of figures is not easy because of the abolition. Nevertheless, taking into account central funding and funding which has nothing to do with the Government, there has been a substantial percentage increase in arts funding since 1979-80. That is warmly to be welcomed.

Although the motion concentrates on business sponsorship, it is not intended to be—I am sure that my right hon. Friend will not take it from me as being—a replacement for official arts support. I have always felt that in the mechanism of the Arts Council, which, of

[Sir William van Straubenzee]

course, dates back many years, we have a typical British compromise which makes a great deal of sense. It is approximately analogous to what we have in education with the University Grants Committee. In both cases, the vast majority of the funding comes from central Government, but there is not the detailed daily supervision and intervention by central Government which most hon. Members would find abhorrent.

The essence of sponsorship is that there is something in it for both parties. There is a considerable amount in it for the art form which has benefited. True sponsorship is normally tax deductible, and, entirely legitimately, there is a spin-off—if I may so express it—for the firm doing the sponsoring. No one finds that an unattractive concept.

I should like to draw attention to the remarkable business sponsorship incentive scheme which is associated with my noble Friend the Earl of Gowrie, who was formerly Minister for the Arts. It is a most imaginative idea, and I am delighted to see how successful it has been. The House is well aware of how it operates, but those outside the House may not properly appreciate that there is a pound-for-pound matching contribution from the Government for first-time sponsors. That idea has caught on and substantial additional revenue has been made available.

One of the most welcome features of the scheme is the way that it has encouraged the arts outside London. Some years ago I was answerable to the House when the then Minister for the Arts, my noble Friend Lord Eccles, was in another place. He was something of a pioneer in focusing attention upon the necessity of getting out of the capital city a higher proportion of our artistic performances —of all kinds—than had previously been the case.

There must be many hon. Members here today who, like myself, obtain enormous pleasure from the arts in the provinces, including museums. Few aspects of education have improved recently more than the presentation of exhibits and so on in museums. I am sure that all hon. Members can think of examples outside London — sometimes in small towns — of open-air museums associated with agriculture or local industry which are imaginative in the extreme. I know that some people find commercialism unattractive. My first and only visit so far to such a museum was to the Yorvic exhibition in York. I found that an absolutely fascinating experience. When one bears in mind that it has repaid its capital expenditure in a short time in commercial terms, that shows exactly what can be done and yet be educative at the same time.

Seventy per cent. of the BSIS money is spent on encouragement of the arts outside London. That is a most encouraging proportion and I commend the BSIS on it. As the House well knows, there is an enormous revival in the theatre at the circumference, and one thinks here of some of the great, well known theatre groups such as the Royal Exchange in Manchester. There could not be a more exciting experience than witnessing the Theatre in the Round at Manchester Royal Exchange, and it employs an imaginative use of buildings that are no longer used for the purpose for which they were originally built. One hopes for the continuance of that remarkable company, and of the smaller groups that travel to small towns and villages and schools and bring some of their enormous artistic abilities to the young in particular and to those who do not find it easy to travel to the centre of, in this case, Manchester.

I find infinite pleasure and refreshment from time to time in the modern, rebuilt and charming theatre at Salisbury, and I rejoice in the fact that it is there because of a combination of private and public money raised by many tens of hundreds of people. I realise that sponsorship money causes anxiety to some people, but I hope that we will not hear the argument that we should form some separate judgment on the source of the money, and should apply in terms of arts expenditure some separate sieve through which that money should go. Surely the test is: is the activity in which the commercial company or partnership engaged legal or not?

I know that some hon. Members are uneasy about sponsorship by tobacco companies. To select tobacco and only tobacco seems an odd order of priorities. So that I reveal everything, I must say that I am—as long as the adjective is recorded—a very modest smoker. I do not think that I ever smoke more than two cigarettes a day and very often I smoke none at all. I am also a modest eater of sweets.

It seems to me astonishing that a Right-wing Conservative Minister should have intervened in the advertising of one product in one area which has simply removed competition and secured the position of the big companies. Never mind, that is in the past. We must remember that other activities, which may be perfectly lawfully carried on, if carried to excess, are harmful. Every year tons of children's teeth rot because they eat too many sweets. At the moment it is perfectly legal to eat sweets.

The biggest single killer in this country is obesity, and when I look around the Chamber I can see a number of lost battles. Fortunately, I am not standing in front of a mirror. In this sense nature is unfair. I am certain that my right hon. Friend the Minister could eat a cloche of potatoes at a sitting and it would make no visible change to his elegant shape. I have only to look at a potato, let alone eat the beastly thing, and I put on weight. If we really want to reduce the pressures on our hospitals we should do something drastic about obesity.

I am simply making the point—I am doing no more than this—that to select one activity in arts sponsorship and to use arts sponsorship as a method of proceeding with a campaign seems to get the matter out of proportion.

On the matter of taxation, there is a considerable success story that I gladly acknowledge. I know that my right hon. Friend has no responsibility as a Treasury Minister, but he represents the Government here and it is right for me to pay that tribute through him as the representative of the Government. It is enormously helpful that we have markedly lower rates of personal taxation than we had in 1979, and that we have abolished the investment income surcharge. That has been immensely helpful to the arts. As all charities know, associated with the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary was a reduction in the period of years of covenanting. That has been of enormous benefit to charities generally and to arts operations, which, of course, are also charities.

I say all those things gratefully, because I do not want to be mealy-mouthed or mean about it or seem not to understand what has already been done. I am speaking within a short time of the Budget and I hope that the

Government and my right hon. Friend in particular will look at the eighth report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. The Committee reported in the last Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) is present. I know he was much associated with that and I think he will agree that the Committee is especially associated with my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) was also a member of the Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South has binding constituency engagements, and I know he regrets that he cannot be here today. I think he was the founder of the parliamentary arts and heritage group and his work in that group immensely enriches our cultural life in the Palace of Westminster.

The Committee explored further ways of making available private moneys, whether from corporate or personal sources, and putting up specific schemes. I will not go through those schemes in detail because it would be wearisome for the House. Suffice it to say that I hope that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will be able in his Budget to take the next step forward. If he could come to the view that contributions made by individuals or corporate bodies to charitable projects should be fully tax deductible, that could unleash surprisingly large funds for the interests that we all have at heart.

I recognise, although I do not want to go into detail, that, as in the United States, there would have to be certain limits and parameters. However, the Government might be surprised at the extent and range of funds that would become available for the arts. I am talking not about wider charitable objectives, because today we are talking about the arts. One of my reasons for choosing this motion, timed for debate shortly before the Budget, is to see whether my view is echoed in other parts of the House and, if it is, to hope that it will be listened to closely and with attention in the Treasury.

There is a great tradition in this country of individual support for charitable objectives in general and artistic objectives in particular, but, in spite of the remarkable changes today, we still live in a nation that many others would regard as highly taxed. This deliberate incentive would go a long way to filling gaps in the funds available.

I welcome the changes recently announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister in connection with the marketing activities of a number of those with which we are concerned, particularly national museums and galleries. I notice with interest his reply on 10 February to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on the changes that he is now making in the financial arrangements for a number for the national museums and galleries. As a result, forecast receipts will no longer be specifically netted off against total estimated requirements and a reasonable facility to carry over unspent moneys will be made available.

These seem to me to be very important steps forward. I have always been impatient about the argument, although I know that it is to be found in all parties, about charging. Admittedly, I am biased because, at junior Minister level only, I piloted through the House many years ago the Act that enabled charges to be made. That experience made me more than a little cynical, because quite a number of those who were loudest in their condemnation publicly hoped that the policy would come into force so that they could then operate it. They were right to want this policy to work, but I always wish that they would stand up and be counted.

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): This issue is still very much alive. The hon. Member has just made a serious allegation in a broad sweep. Whom does he mean?

Sir William van Straubenzee: It would not be helpful to name persons. Perhaps one day, if the hon. Gentleman has saved up, he will buy my memoirs, which will be the best way to find out what he wants to know. There is no doubt that this was the experience of all of us who were working in this sector then. I am not saying that everyone behaved like that, but some did.

I become very impatient and cross about this because, when we visit great galleries in foreign countries, we expect, as a matter of course, to pay our way. Provided that there are arrangements for bona fide students or the elderly, I cannot find this an unacceptable method of financing.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Perhaps in volume 42 of his memoirs the hon. Member would like to tell us whether he feels that charging for admission should be seen, like business sponsorship, merely as a top up of good, solid base money from the Government or as a substitute for it. Three museums have announced in the past 24 hours that, because of a lack of central funds, they will have to resort to charging to make up their revenue.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I hoped that I had established at the outset that I see all these methods as additional funding. That helpful intervention allows me to draw attention to the significant change that my right hon. Friend the Minister has initiated, which makes it clear how much more attractive it is for these institutions to charge so that they can keep and carry over, as they could not before, the proceeds. That was one of the great weaknesses of the situation until the recent and good announcement by my right hon. Friend.

I see this as a two-pronged method. I have never expected any of these great institutions to finance themselves solely from charging. However, there is an element of hysteria. I meet it in a different sector. For example, because of huge costs, some Anglican cathedrals are making a charge for admission either directly, which is the position recently established at Ely cathedral, or indirectly, for example, at Salisbury, where it is done by asking the visitor for a voluntary donation for which he is thanked by the issue of a ticket. Whichever method or combination of methods is used, it is always the people who would not dream of darkening the doors of the cathedral for its main purpose who complain.

At Salisbury, a small inquiry was carried out into the few people who complained, and it was found that overwhelmingly they were Non-conformist schoolmasters. Non-conformist schoolmasters are worthy people both because they are Non-conformist and because they are schoolmasters. However, under neither head do they have any right to free entry to an Anglican cathedral. I am relaxed, provided certain provisions are made, about making a charge for such an institution, bearing in mind the immense costs that are now necessary to maintain them. However, I must not develop that argument.

I very much approve, support and welcome all that my right hon. Friend the Minister is doing to get these

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institutions more market-oriented. Last night, I had the great privilege of being at the Royal Academy to see an exhibition, which I strongly commend to the House, of the work of its first president, Sir Joshua Reynolds. I have a personal interest because I am descended from two of his nieces. It is a beautiful exhibition, and, very fairly, a great commercial professional partnership had taken it for the evening. I imagine, although I did not wish to inquire because I was a guest, that the company paid properly for the privilege. We were able to enjoy it with great pleasure and it was able to do some sponsoring. When I refreshed myself at the bookstall — although that is a wholly inadequate word to describe it and perhaps "shop" might be better—I saw marketing of a high order.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): The hon. Gentleman has said that he is related to two great nieces of Sir Joshua Reynolds. Were they Siamese twins?

Sir William van Straubenzee: It is possible to be descended from two nieces. If the hon. Gentleman really wishes to know, I shall try to give him a tree some time. Suffice it to say that in two successive generations first cousins married each other. I dare say that the hon. Gentleman will think that that explains a lot.

I warmly support the general principle of Government policy. I welcome the actions of my right hon. Friend the Minister. However, I give him a gentle, respectful nudge — not a kick from behind — in his representative capacity, and not because it is his personal responsibility, in the direction of further moves in the Budget. I hope that the fact that we can discuss these matters will be of assistance to the arts in general.

10.10 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) on his choice of subject for debate this morning. Before I became a Member I had the privilege of giving evidence to the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts, which he chairs. I remember the experience well. He brought to the Committee all the wit, charm and courtesy that hon. Members have come to expect of him.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I was not the Chairman then.

Mr. Banks: In that case, it was someone who looked remarkably like the hon. Member, which sounds a rather unusual event. It was an enjoyable experience to appear before the Committee, although I am not sure whether that was the experience of the Committee members.

The hon. Member for Wokingham has given us a chance to discuss the subject in the presece of the Minister for the Arts, who has proved himself ready to listen carefully, and in some cases to deliver the goods. He has also shown himself capable of living off his ministerial salary, which is more than his predecessor was able to do.

The Opposition do not reject the concept of business sponsorship. The hon. Member for Wokingham mentioned marketing at the Royal Academy. I hope that when he is walking on the south side of the river—I see him on several occasions walking across the bridge and we nod at each other—he will go to the Royal Festival hall and see the improvements in marketing. When I was chairman of the Greater London council arts and recreation committee, I took a personal interest in marketing. We have increased audiences for concerts, the open foyer policy has meant an extra 30,000 visits a week and it is making money and showing a good return for London ratepayers.

We have no ideological objection to business sponsorship or to marketing the arts in a more imaginative and profitable way, but I am sure that the hon. Member for Wokingham would expect me to express a few words of caution. I feel uneasy about some types of business sponsorship. I do not intend to make a big issue of it, because I am sure that it will be taken up by other hon. Members. However, the products and sphere of activity of certain companies make them unacceptable as arts funders.

We should keep business sponsorship in some form of economic perspective. I do not wish to bore the House with statistics, but a few might put the matter into context. In 1985-86 the Government provided the Arts Council with about £106 million for central arts funding. Local authorities provided a further £170 million, and it is estimated that business sponsorship provided £17 million. That sum of £17 million in 1985-86 compares with £276 million worth of public funding. I am not sneering at that amount, because it was welcome and it was no doubt put to good use, but, as the hon. Member for Wokingham said, that can only be top-up money. It does not come over clearly from the Conservative Benches that it is not free money, merely because it comes from private companies. There is no such thing as a free lunch even if hon. Members are often encouraged to believe that there is. Most of that £17 million worth of business sponsorship for the arts can be written off as legitimate business expenses. In that way, the Treasury and taxpayers can be seen to be footing the bill, albeit in an indirect fashion.

We must consider the qualitative difference between public and business funding. Public funding of the arts is disinterested in the finest sense of the word. It is impartial funding for the arts. Those who accused the GLC of being politically motivated in terms of arts funding did not know the real truth. The council, when I was chairman of the arts and recreation committee, or as a member of the Labour administration, never sought to use the arts as a way of bringing political pressure to bear on any arts body.

Public funding is impartial and disinterested, but much business funding is specifically targeted. It tends towards the well-established art forms — high culture and prestigious arts activities. Immediately, the opera, ballet and classical music come to mind. The Reynolds exhibition is a fine one, and I am sure that companies are prepared to fund it, but there is a good arts centre in Brixton, with a fine collection of paintings and sculptures. It would be good if companies were prepared to fund that area of activity also.

It is relatively easy for prestigious arts activities to attract business funding. The difficulty of attracting private funding arises in the seed bed, which has less kudos. Marks and Spencer is an honourable exception, but most companies steer clear of the innovative arts and avoid the avant garde. The ethnic and community arts cannot secure local or national business funding. I assure Conservative Members that they try hard to do so, because money from most sources must be welcome.

Targeting of business funding often arises from the decisions of managing directors, who tend to be

conservative, with a small "c" but often with a capital "C". They tend to consider the safe areas of arts activity which will not offend their clients or shareholders. I encourage Conservative Members to read the excellent report of the Association of Business Sponsorship for the Arts. I commend the organisation and its director, Colin Tweedy, on the excellent work of the association. When hon. Members have read the report, seen the arts bodies that are being funded by business and the monthly calendar of the Royal Festival hall showing the types of concerts that are sponsored and by which companies, they will recognise that I am speaking the truth about the targeting that companies adopt.

I would enter a further caveat and say that I do not want companies to become the arbiters of artistic taste or to determine, through their funding, the pattern of what will be made available to the general public. Every generation inherits an artistic legacy, and it is the duty of each generation to add to that legacy, not just to live off it. It is our responsibility to develop the arts that we inherit to increase their richness and depth. As the hon. Member for Wokingham said, that can be done only through the public funding of the arts, with business sponsorship providing only a little icing on the cake.

Another point about business sponsorship—I am not carping, but anticipating some of the things that are likely to be said later this morning—is that companies expect a great deal in return for what they put into the arts. Indeed, they expect red carpet treatment. Many of them expect numerous complimentary tickets for performances that they have sponsored, and the private use of hospitality suites. They want generous acknowledgment on posters, in programmes and in other forms of publicity. I do not blame them for that, but let no one suggest that altruism drives those companies to fund the arts. They are not disinterested in the sense that public investment and sponsorship of the arts is disinterested.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): When the GLC has funded an artistic activity and the posters say in large letters that it is GLC funded, is that altruistic?

Mr. Banks: It is not altruistic at all. I am merely trying to anticipate some of the remarks that might be made later by Conservative Members. I accept that companies have a right to expect something in return for their sponsorship of the arts.

When I was the chairman of the arts and recreation committee of the GLC, I was worried by the refusal of the BBC to acknowledge the GLC's funding of the arts in London. When the BBC broadcasts a concert from the Royal Festival hall, it is ready to say that the concert is sponsored by John Player, Unilever or Metal Box. Indeed, Ministers encourage the BBC to do that to encourage companies to put more money into the arts, which would be seen as a good return on their investment. When I asked the BBC to say that the concert was taking place in the GLC's Royal Festival hall, funded by the ratepayers of London, it refused to do so. I wanted to get that point over to establish in the minds of London ratepayers what they were getting for their rates. They are as entitled to know what they are getting for their rates as a shareholder is entitled to know what he is getting in return for his investment in a company. That is another reason why companies invest money in the arts—it is good for the corporate image and for their reputation among their shareholders.

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): The logical conclusion of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is that every time the BBC radio broadcasts from this place it must acknowledge the fact that the taxpayers pay for it. It must stop somewhere. Taxpayers and ratepayers do not deserve the credit for such matters.

Mr. Banks: I agree that it must stop somewhere, but I do not believe that it should stop at the Royal Festival hall. I am interested in marketing techniques, and I believe that we must market the public sector as much as we must market the private sector. Image-building is as good for the public sector as it is for the private sector. I see no distinction between the two. What worried me was that the public funding of the arts, especially on the South Bank, was going almost unacknowledged. I did not want the ratepayers of London to believe that the concerts were all provided by the good intentions of private companies. Although it was good that the private companies had done it, unless the GLC had been prepared to invest £4·5 million of ratepayers' money every year, there would not have been a concert hall in which John Player, Unilever or Metal Box could sponsor concerts.

I do not object to companies asking for something in return for their business sponsorship of the arts, but I wish the House to acknowledge that this is what drives them to give money to the arts. It is not sheer altruism on their part. Of course, the hon. Member for Wokingham did not suggest that. I am in the difficulty of trying to anticipate some of the hairier speeches that I fear are likely to follow mine. It is tricky to do so when one has not heard those speeches, but I shall sit here and listen to them, and I am sure that I shall wish to intervene in the speeches of some hon. Members.

Private sponsorship often receives credit disproportionate to its level of arts funding. To cap it all, most of what companies spend on the arts can be claimed back as legitimate business expenses. Business funding represents good business propositions for companies, which is why most of them become involved in it.

In about four weeks' time the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils will be abolished —[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] Hon. Members may say that, but it is all bravado. All thinking members of the Conservative party know that the abolition of the GLC is a complete mistake, brought about by the political vindictiveness of the Prime Minister. London's taxpayers and ratepayers will regret her actions in great measure until the next Labour Government can restore citywide administration to London.

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to intervene to discuss the abolition of the GLC. We are talking about business sponsorship of the arts.

Mr. Bowden: I am grateful for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My ratepayers in Southwark have been greatly encouraged by the fact that since the decision to abolish the GLC and to introduce ratecapping their rates bills have been reduced by 25 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is defying the point that I put to him, which is that the House is discussing business sponsorship of the arts, not the rates.

Mr. Banks: I know exactly what you will say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I say simply to the hon. Gentleman, "Just wait". The bill will have to be met at some stage.

I shall relate the abolition of the GLC to the arts and the motion on business sponsorship. The abolition will have an appalling effect on the arts. It will not take effect immediately, like the rate bills which the hon. Member for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) mentioned. However, within six months to a year the true impact will become apparent. Up to 100 arts organisations in London could cease to exist in that time. Yesterday the Arts Council made an announcement about the funding of the arts organisations that will lose their GLC and metropolitan county support. The Arts Council has said that those companies' grants will not be reduced in 1986-87, but that is not the real issue. Will they receive money to replace the grant that they will lose after the GLC and the metropolitan counties are abolished?

The abolition of the GLC will have a severe impact on the community and ethnic arts — precisely the areas where business sponsorship has little, if any, effect. But it will no stop there. Some of the more established and larger arts companies in London will also face dire times and possible closure. We have heard several times about the problems of Sadler's Wells, the Almeida theatre in Islington, the Riverside theatre in Hammersmith, the Theatre Royal Stratford in my borough of Newham, and about the possible closure of the Cottesloe theatre on the South Bank. It was closed last year, but was reopened after the GLC provided a special grant.

The hon. Member for Wokingham correctly and properly drew our attention to the fact that the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils will have an impact on the arts. It is right, therefore, to ask what role business sponsorship can play. I have tried to find out from the companies that will be affected just how important business sponsorship is to them. I have already referred to the fact that business sponsorship of community and ethnic arts activities is virtually nil. It is usually provided for one-off projects and amounts to a few hundred pounds. Marks and Spencer is one of the companies which are prepared to provide that form of sponsorship. There is no kudos to be gained from sponsoring that kind of arts activity, so there is little, if any, funding of it.

Business support of the larger and more prestigious arts organisations in London still represents only a small fraction of their overall funding. I have already mentioned Sadler's Wells, which does very well from business sponsorship. It is very aggressive in the way it goes out to get business sponsorship. However, out of a turnover of £2 million it receives only about £230,000 in private sponsorship. It will have to find a replacement for the Greater London council's grant of £155,000. If it tried to replace the whole of that grant through business sponsorship, it would need almost to double the amount of money that it now receives. However, it is getting to the limit of what it can do by its own efforts.

Business sponsorship of the English National Opera Company, which is one of the most prestigious arts associations in the country, accounts for 3·4 per cent. of its budget, and 3 per cent. of the National Theatre's budget is accounted for by business sponsorship. After the abolition of the GLC, taking into account the additional money that the Government are prepared to provide for the arts, the shortfall of arts funding in London will amount to about £10 million. There is no way in which business sponsorship can even begin to replace that level of public funding. Because of the economic circumstances in which many businesses find themselves, it is evident that they would prefer to spend their money on other things rather than on business sponsorship of the arts.

If the Government are not prepared to increase the level of direct arts funding, they should consider a reform of the tax system which would provide tax incentives for corporate or individual support of the arts. I believe that the hon. Member for Wokingham made exactly this suggestion to his Front Bench. I hope that the Minister will discuss with his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer the abolition of value added tax on ticket sales. That would provide a tremendous boost for the arts. The taxpayers would be paying for it because the Treasury would not get those receipts, but the Chancellor might find that a better way to give money to the arts rather than through direct Government subsidy.

If the Minister cannot announce later from the Dispatch Box that he has been able to find another bag of money for the arts in London, will he please look at the activities of the Greater London Enterprise Board, which has invested about £1 million in the arts by means of a series of commercial loans through the banks? About 30 arts activities now receive loans instead of GLC grants and subsidies. Perhaps the Minister will ask the Arts Council how many arts groups have been recommended by the Arts Council for the Government's small business grant scheme.

The arts are big business, besides being something from which we derive great pleasure. The Arts Council says that, nationwide, 175,000 people are employed in the arts. If one takes a broader view of the arts and talks about the cultural industries, the GLC has identified about 250,000 people who are employed in those industries in London. In recognition of that, the Greater London Enterprise Board produced a cultural industries strategy. During his busy day, I hope that the Minister will find time to look through that strategy. If he does, he will see that jobs in the leisure, artistic and sports categories are due to increase by about 30 per cent. during the 1980s. Ministers, faced with the appalling unemployment figures that arise from the Government's economic policies, should be interested in those sectors of the economy which promise such substantial increases in employment during the 1980s.

The arts represent big business. The Arts Council says that they present a great British success story. At times I find that this is a slightly distasteful way of approaching the arts, but one has to be realistic. Faced as it is by hard faced, stony faced monetarists, no doubt the Arts Council feels that this is the way to get to the Conservative Government and entice some hard cash out of them.

The Arts Council points out that most of the direct Government grant to the arts comes back to the Government in one form of taxation or another. The Government get a very good return on their investment in the arts. The arts attract tourists, who represent one of the Government's finest returns on their investment. It is objectionable when Conservative Members refer to this as a subsidy to the arts. They should refer to it as investment in the arts. Our investment in the arts leads to a substantial return for taxpayers. We never hear about subsidies for

defence or for education. We hear about defence expenditure or education expenditure. We should also talk about arts expenditure and investment in the arts.

Business sponsorship of the arts is small, and it is unstable, because it can be stopped at any time. It is far more unstable than public subsidy of the arts through the Arts Council or local authorities. I endorse the view of the hon. Member for Wokingham that business sponsorship can never, nor must it ever, replace the impartial funding of the arts. The arts in Britain are still grossly underfunded. It would be the mark of a truly civilised Government if they gave a much higher priority to arts expenditure, but for that we shall have to await the triumph of Labour at the coming general election.

10.37 am

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). At one point he suggested that business sponsorship is inadequate because it is too selective. He suggested that businesses sponsor only prestigious national events, and are not prepared to sponsor events that are of local importance, such as events that are of interest to ethnic minorities in Brixton.

Yet last year in my constituency, Thames Television, which has studios at Teddington, gave £2,000 to sponsor a charity concert at St. Mary's college, Strawberry Hill. The concert raised about £12,000 for the Save the Children Fund famine in Africa appeal. Squires garden centre, a popular garden centre in Twickenham, gave £500 to sponsor a choral concert in St. Mary's church, Hampton, which raised about £1,500 for a new chapel there. That shows what can be done on a local basis.

Local sponsorship need not be confined to business sponsorship. There could be local authority sponsorship. If events in Brixton ought to be supported, there is no reason why Lambeth borough council should not be encouraged to support them. I should like very many more of the local authorities, including the 32 London borough councils, to supplement by local sponsorship the work of the Arts Council for which in London my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts was able to secure a large additional grant from the Treasury, largely to replace the Greater London council's funding of the arts in Greater London.

Mr. Buchan: The hon. Gentleman must take on board the position in the London boroughs. Islington has five important theatres that were previously supported by the GLC. Camden borough is home to the important theatre museum library and yet is expected to pay for it out of its own grant. Many such institutions have had a heavy clobbering, especially when boroughs such as the hon. Gentleman's borough are not prepared to contribute if the institution is not in their own direct area.

Mr. Jessel: The hon. Member for Newham, North-West three times mentioned Sadler's Wells which is in Islington. The problems of Sadler's Wells, thanks to the intervention of the Minister for the Arts, have been largely resolved.

If, in any borough, there are important arts institutions which can attract tourists and visitors to those boroughs, then local firms, from pubs to restaurants and shops, will derive revenue from those visitors which will ultimately be reflected in the rate revenues. There is no reason why those boroughs should not support the institutions to a reasonable extent.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West has suggested that there is something unstable about business sponsorship. I refer to the impressive speech of my hon. Friend for Wokingham, (Sir W. van Straubenzee), to whom we are all indebted for instituting this debate. He mentioned the growth in business sponsorship. Ten years ago business sponsorship amounted to £0·5 million. Today it amounts to approximately £20 million. That is a 2,000 per cent. increase in 10 years. It is growing steadily year by year, thanks to the excellent work of the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, first under Mr. Luke Rittner and later under Mr. Tweedy. There is nothing "unstable" in such a dramatic growth in business sponsorship of the arts.

Such sponsorship is of benefit to the arts, to the sponsors and to the national economy. This was borne out by a notable paper presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) to the Council of Europe when the Assembly approved his document on business sponsorship of the arts, which will enable continental countries to learn from our successful experience. However, despite the amount of £20 million, there is a long way to go and I believe there is room for massive further expansion. We must build on our success.

Britain is one of the arts capitals of the world. There is a great flowering of artistic and creative talent, echoing the first Elizabethan age. We have magnificent theatres, great museums and art galleries, a tremendous range of wonderful historic buildings, we have first-class opera and ballet and, if you will allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the finest military bands in the world whose high standards of excellence are one of the glories of this country. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I hope that the Arts Minister will convey the support of the House, as expressed a moment ago, on this matter to the Secretary of State for Defence.

All these things comprise a network of tradition and heritage of the arts which are a great national asset. They are a strength to this country and it is a strength on which we must build. The arts not only serve to provide enrichment and fulfilment to the lives of our 54 million people; they attract visitors. The arts are what visitors come to see and hear. The arts and our heritage are to Britain what the sun is to Spain. Twelve million tourists come to this country every year and they spend £5,000 million. That is a vital part of Britain's invisible export earnings. Those visitors who are drawn here by our heritage and arts spend partly on those, but also spend a great deal of money on hotels, restaurants and shops. Such spending generates income, employment and a tax yield to the Government.

That tax yield cannot be measured directly and for that reason I am afraid it may not be given sufficient weight by the Treasury. I believe emphatically that the Treasury should not overlook it. The Government have done a great deal to support the arts especially in the past year or two. The funding of the arts in real terms has increased by about 10 per cent. in recent years. There are numerous tax reliefs which no doubt will be mentioned by my right hon. Friend. The Minister and his predecessors have actively promoted business sponsorship and have encouraged the work of the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts and of the sponsoring companies.

[Mr. Jessel]

However, in terms of direct Government finance, the proportion of our national budget devoted to the Arts Council and other support for the arts, is at present only one part out of 1,300. I believe this could be usefully supplemented by further tax reliefs as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham. We can learn from the United States, both in terms of individual and business sponsorship. We should not overlook individual sponsorship. It is true that the period for the deeds of covenant has been reduced from seven to four years—that is a step in the right direction. I believe that if individuals were able to give to charities, including arts charities, even on a one-off basis and still claim tax relief, it would result in a large net increase in the support for charities and the arts—even if the percentage of the sums did not amount to the 80 per cent. of art donations achieved in the United States.

Business sponsorship too is extremely important. Businesses can now advertise arts and other charitable events in brochures and claim tax relief as it is an advertisement and therefore promoting their business. Businesses, however, cannot, by a donation, obtain tax relief that would benefit the arts or charitable body unless they covenant to donate for three consecutive years. I see no need for that. There is no compelling reason why the Government should not look favourably upon the proposal that businesses should be able to claim relief from corporation tax and other taxes by one-off donations to the arts and charities. This would be a great encouragement to the arts and charities and would encourage businesses to do more in support of these bodies. The promotion and expansion of the arts would help to improve their high standards of excellence, encourage an increase in tourism, which would generate income and employment and would repay the Government in tax more than the relief that they give directly.

10.48 am

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) on his good fortune in the ballot. It is salutary that the gods of chance smile upon him who answers for the Church Commission in this place. I commend the hon. Member for choosing this important subject for debate. We get far too little time to discuss the arts.

I was pleased to hear the hon. Gentleman concede that business sponsorship would supply only part of the money that is required for the arts. He will remember when, under his chairmanship of the Select Committee, the former Minister for the Arts gave evidence to it and said:

> "We do not look upon business sponsorship or private patronage to take on the role of state funding but to provide a welcome addition to it."

That is exactly as it should be.

I took the point made by the hon. Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) about endowment funds and tax concessions for the provision of continuing money. One of the most difficult things that theatres and arts companies have to put up with is the annual grant-aid, which prevents them from making long-term plans. We must support an endowment fund. We favour a move from charitable donations to a more long-term commitment to give stability to arts groups and organisations. Unlike covenants, they do not have to tie up sums of money for years to come, but give arts groups a fixed budget to manage. It probably gives them greater independence—it certainly gives them greater maturity.

Endowments can come from a one-off grant from corporate or individual donors or from the proceeds of commercial revenue operations. The shift to endowments could be achieved gradually. I should like to give the Minister a word of warning about the much heralded tax concessions, which may come in the Budget, in respect of contributions to charity. A substantial number of theatrical organisations, however charitable in effect, do not have charitable status. I refer to small and successful theatre companies, such as the Almeida theatre company. My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) has the Northumberland theatre company based in Alnwick which tours around Northumberland. My wife runs the Southwold summer theatre, which also is not a charity, but nevertheless greatly needs sponsorship.

I wonder whether it might not be sensible for regional arts associations to establish regional charitable trusts into which money, which would be VAT effective, could be put. The money could then be passed to theatrical organisations without charitable status. I realise that it is not that difficult to achieve charitable status—about 3,000 charities are registered every year—but one of the problems of people in the theatre is that they are not particularly good at administration. I wonder whether, apart from the welcome injection of capital, business help could include the provision of at least the training of administrators, public relations people and marketeers, so that theatres could run that much more efficiently.

The Minister will know that all theatrical companies which pay their staff tend to be under-staffed. The time spent filling in applications, looking for sponsors and trying to find money could be spent much more gainfully on production if business sponsors were generous enough to provide an element of administrative help with their money.

I should like to say something about tobacco sponsorship. I have always believed that an industry which is geared to killing should not be allowed also to enhance life. Sir Roy Shaw, talking to the British Medical Association, used the memorable words:

> "I sympathise with those who are driven by poverty to accept tobacco money, but it is surely wrong to use the life-enhancing image of arts and sports to put a glamorous mask on the ugly face of a life diminishing product".

I am basically unhappy to have purveyors of death enhancing the arts, but I am substantially unhappy when such contributions are matched by Government money. I am extremely unhappy about a scheme in which manufacturers of cigarettes sponsor a theatrical production and the Government, who spend millions of pounds on health authorities, warnings on cigarette packets and directives to radio and television regulating advertising, now, under the business incentive scheme, contribute extra money to support such theatrical ventures in the name of cigarette companies. Tobacco is the only product which the Government agree is dangerous to health. The industry tells us that it is involved in product differentiation; it says that it sponsors, not to get new people to smoke, but to get people who smoke another brand to come over to the advertised product.

But it is naive to accept that the images created do not reach non-smokers and influence them. It is quite appalling that Britain's youth is led to believe that it cannot

play cricket decently unless it smokes Benson and Hedges or that part and parcel of driving a racing car is the inhalation of Marlboro.

Sir William van Straubenzee: I am sure the hon. Gentleman remembers that I explored this matter quite fully in my speech. He knows that there is a great problem with alcoholism among young people. I should like him to make clear whether he accepts sponsorship from brewery companies or others who make and market alcoholic drinks.

Mr. Freud: I was coming to that. The hon. Gentleman must accept that tobacco is the only product which harms the person who takes it, irrespective of the quantity. All other harmful products are harmful only in excess. There is no harm at all in drinking in moderation or in eating potatoes in moderation. Actually it is not the potatoes that made the hon. Gentleman fat; it is the combination of the fat in which the potatoes were fried and the gravy that he puts over them. However, there is genuinely harm in having even one or two cigarettes; none in having one or two potatoes or one or two small whiskies.

Sponsorship makes the companies look like good guys and is thus an exercise in public deception, which is why I should like the Minister to think again most carefully about allowing the business incentive scheme to recruit cigarette companies. It means that he is helping cigarette companies to spread the message.

Warren Mitchell described the National theatre's decision to accept Imperial Tobacco money as whoring, and I do not disagree. Paul Eddington has resigned from the board of governors of the Old Vic because it accepted £20,000 from a tobacco company. If we are told that cutting sponsorship will hurt jobs, it is clear that sponsorship must increase total consumption and not be just about product differentiation. If so, the arguments for stopping tobacco sponsorship are even clearer, as it is obvious that accepting it increases illness and death.

I am chairman of the Friends of the British Council, which has done an excellent job. It strongly favours business sponsorship. In the past year it received £250,000 in business sponsorship out of a budget of £3 million. It needs such money to be paid for substantial periods of time and for it to be matched. Although uniquely Brunel received sufficient money for a three-year period, it is rarely enough to go to a business sponsor and say, "Do this for us," without saying, "Here is our investment, help us to top it up".

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West, (Mr. Banks) said that the Arts Council employs 175,000 people. If we could get business sponsorship for the arts right, if we could provide greater incentives and better administration, the figure of 175,000 would be immensely increased. The frightening figure is how many people in the arts are not employed. A huge percentage of the members of Equity are out of work and have little hope of finding more than one job every other year.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman puts his finger on a crucial point. The largest support for the arts comes from the low wages and poor conditions of the 175,000 people employed within the industry. Equity suggests that three out of four of its members are out of work at any given time.

Mr. Freud: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that information; I share his concern.

I once again compliment the hon. Member for Wokingham on his choice of subject. I also compliment the Minister, who to date has done an excellent job, as I am sure the whole House would agree. He has been courteous and attentive to the arts lobby and has appeared at a surprisingly large number of events. The world of arts is grateful to him.

11.2 am

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): This time last week I was addressing the House on my private Member's Bill on tobacco sponsorship of sport. I do not intend to repeat my speech today. However, following the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) and of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), and as I am chairman of the all-party group for action on smoking and health, I have to say that, on balance, I find myself nearer the position of the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East than to the position of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham. Tobacco is harmful per se, whereas other products such as alcohol are harmful if abused. After all, smoking is the largest preventable cause of death and disease in this country, with 100,000 people a year dying prematurely as a result of using tobacco products.

I feel less strongly about the sponsorship of arts than about the sponsorship of sport. I hope that eventually the advertising and promotion of tobacco products will be completely stopped. However, I believe that we must start with sport and then move to arts as the next step. If there is any promotion or advertising of tobacco products, it is important that it is made clear that a deadly product is being promoted.

I agree with the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East that it is one matter for a tobacco company to sponsor an arts promotion if it is self-evident that that is what it is doing, but it is another for the Government to be party to a proper campaign to persuade people to stop smoking and young people not to begin, while at the same time encouraging tobacco companies to encourage the arts. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will take to heart the points made on that matter.

I want to relate my comments to the two areas of which I have some experience—an amateur choir and a local theatre. I have been a member of the Royal Choral Society for more than 30 years—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear—give us a song."] Even if I did not have a cold, I would not risk transgressing the rules of order by bursting into song, although part of the Messiah would not be out of place occasionally.

I am grateful to the business managers of the House for so arranging business on Thursday next that in between votes I shall be able to sing Brahms' Requiem at the Royal Festival hall, with or without the sponsorship of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). Knowing of your interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that you will be able to join us on that occasion, together with any other hon. Members who may be free to do so.

During the 30 years that I have been a member of that choir, things have changed a great deal. When I first joined there were no financial problems facing the choir, but now it is difficult for it to keep going. It has to charge a subscription to its members, which was unheard of years ago. It has to undertake all sorts of fund-raising events. For example, last year I was happy to sponsor a reception on the Terrace that raised money for the choir. Of course, it

[Mr. Roger Sims]

receives grants from some quarters, but there is not sufficient money available to meet the much higher costs of running a choir of that character. The hire of halls is far more expensive today than it was a few years ago, as is the hire of orchestras, artistes' fees and music.

Happily, of course, today there are far more demands on the funds available. The mass of theatres in London has already been mentioned, and the Saturday newspapers show the enormous number of concerts and recitals available in London. That is a great pleasure for those who live in London, for those who take part in the events and for visitors. However, they all cost money.

The consequence is that choirs such as the Royal Choral have to seek sponsorship, and that is hard work. We are grateful to companies such as Braun Electric and Whitbread, which have supported us for some years. The managers of the choir have to spend a disproportionate amount of time trying to ensure that the choir is financially viable. They are literally living on a hand-to-mouth basis, one season to another, each season not knowing whether the following season will be financially practicable.

My right hon. Friend the Minister recently visited the Churchill theatre in Bromley, which is situated only a few yards outside my constituency. Many people from the borough of Bromley regularly attend the theatre. I hope that my right hon. Friend was impressed with the building, the management and the quality of production. His visit was very much appreciated. I know that he will have gained his own impression of the quality of the theatre.

The Churchill theatre is in a very difficult financial position, not least since the arbitrary withdrawal of its Arts Council grant which would probably have been about £100,000 this year. I hope that the trustees appreciate that, although the Government rightly give funds to the Arts Council—increasing funds, thanks to the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Minister—the Arts Council, and not the Minister, decides how the money is spent. Nevertheless, there is understandably some disappointment, if not ill feeling, at the way in which the grant has been summarily withdrawn.

The Churchill theatre has therefore had to step up the efforts that it was already making to obtain business sponsorship. It has had some success, but the task is proving very difficult. The administrative director of the theatre comments in a letter to me that

"the main point about sponsorship of the Arts is that it is a very very small proportion of the total turnover of Arts organisations. When it is won it is 'fickle' money in that the sponsor may not wish to continue for a second year or longer period and his decision may have absolutely nothing to do with the Arts organisations' performance. It is therefore a very unreliable source of income."

It is not a new thought in this debate, but the director continues:

"To increase sponsorship of the Arts by any substantial amount I believe that the tax incentives to the sponsor have to be very much more positive. In America for instance Companies are allowed to give 10 per cent. of their expenditure to charities and offset this against their tax which encourages them to give heavily rather than to the Revenue. If the same sort of tax provision could apply to sponsorship of the Arts whether to charity or not, it would obviously be an incentive for firms to support Arts organisations in this manner rather than, at present, supporting them out of their advertising budgets and having to weigh up if every penny is as well spent on sponsoring as on paid advertising."

The director is encouraged, as are we all, by what appear to be inspired leaks about what may be in the forthcoming Budget, but he makes the important point that it is desirable

"that those receiving the donations can give benefits to those giving the donations and still be eligible for tax."

If there is a covenanted donation, the tax benefit goes to the recipient, but in the case of sponsorship, although there is clearly some publicity value for the giver, the material benefits may be limited, and if the sponsor wishes to have material benefits such as free tickets to give to customers he may lose the tax benefit. I therefore endorse the pleas for changes to be made so as to encourage more private funding for the Arts.

A great deal has been done already and tribute is due to my right hon. Friend the Minister and his predecessors for the enormous increase in business sponsorship and the various measures taken to encourage it. Nevertheless, there is scope for much more. One appreciates that this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, but I very much hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister has the Chancellor's ear and will ensure that he gets the message and, to return to the metaphor with which I began, sings the right tune.

11.13 am

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): First, I thank the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) for giving the House the opportunity to debate this important subject. I did not intend to speak this morning, as I am, as it were, passing through on my way back to my constituency. The House will appreciate that Liverpool has problems which require my attendance from time to time, and that is where I shall shortly be. I must therefore apologise to the Minister and to the House if I am not here for the whole of the debate. I shall, however, study with great interest what the Minister says about the future of the arts on Merseyside.

On Merseyside, as in Greater London, the arts receive generous contributions from the business world—from companies, trade unions, chambers of commerce and individual businesses. My postbag shows, however, that the people of Merseyside do not regard business sponsorship as any substitute for the loss that will be incurred after 31 March when the Merseyside county council, like the GLC, is abolished. Many of my constituents and others, some of whom would certainly not have voted for me or for the Labour party at the last election, believe that on 1 April they will have lost a very good friend in the Merseyside county council.

That is not to diminish the role played by business organisations, which for many years have contributed to the Royal Philharmonic orchestra, to the city's theatres and to sporting activities, if I may broaden the term "arts" to that extent. Merseyside is renowned for its arts activities, and the county council has been second only to the GLC in municipal support for the arts, as the figures clearly show. The demise of the county council will leave an enormous gap which in all honesty cannot be met by business organisations. Even if Merseyside were relocated in London, which despite its problems is a far more prosperous focal point of arts and business activity, there would still be insufficient prosperity in the business life of the community for it to contribute generously enough to fill the gap now filled by the county council.

Merseyside has suffered considerable economic decline over the years and businesses must look to the investment of every penny to ensure a suitable return. The House will appreciate, therefore, that the business community on Merseyside cannot possibly be expected to fulfil the role now carried out by the county council. Many of our institutions are under serious threat. Constituents write to me asking me what I am doing about the Royal Philharmonic orchestra and the Philharmonic hall, the Playhouse and the ice rink. I hope that the Minister will deal with those points.

Liverpool is a large city, covering six constituencies. My constituency, in the centre of Merseyside but on the outer perimeter of Liverpool, contains the Croxteth hall and country park, a magnificient old hall which is in danger of going to seed and parkland being converted by the county council for community use. There is a model farm to give children and others who live in urban areas an idea of a rural setting, but the animals are now threatened with slaughter. The problem is as serious as that because the body being asked to take over is a rate-capped authority — Liverpool city council. Whatever our differences about the political life of Liverpool, it is clear that that authority cannot possibly provide sufficient funds for the hall and country park to survive.

That park is part of the heritage of Merseyside. When my constituents write to me, they do not want me to get more business sponsorship, but they put pressure on me to say to the Government, "What are you going to do about it? Will you provide adequate resources to Liverpool city council so that it can cater for such halls and estates? Will they provide organisational backing, with funding?"

If all is lost and Liverpool city council finds that it cannot provide the funding, given the Government's financial policies towards local authorities, with which I disagree, the Government should be looking for a way of dealing with those important aspects of the cultural life of my city and the surrounding area. It is part of Britain. Indeed, in a debate last year the former Minister responsible for sport talked about Croxteth hall and country park. He said that it was not a city matter, but a regional matter. I should say that it is a national matter, because Croxteth hall and country park, left by the Earls of Sefton to Liverpool city, and inherited by Merseyside county council, cannot exist against the background of Liverpool's financial stringency.

If the funds are not provided for Liverpool, the matter needs to be taken up by the Merseyside Residuary Body. Of course, we can appeal to the organisations on Merseyside—we shall appeal to business organisations —but I emphasise that with our rich heritage in music and the arts we cannot rely upon that. I invite the Minister to come to Croxteth hall and country park and talk to the local community.

Mr. Buchan: What does my hon. Friend expect to happen to that marvellous piece of industrial archaeological development, plus modern art—the Albert dock?

Mr. Wareing: I cannot answer that, because no answers are coming from the Government. In the past there has been co-operation between Merseyside county council and the Merseyside development corporation, a quango which the Government set up in 1981. I cannot say whether it will take over the Albert dock development. However, the resources will have to be there.

The Minister should look carefully at what Merseyside county council has done. He might even have cause to regret the fact that the Government are abolishing it. If he went there, he would see marvellous works, a whole area around the pierhead in Liverpool, which has been developed by the council. The Albert dock development has shops. It is similar to the St. Katharine's dock development in London. I should say that it was more extensive than that. Albert dock was opened by the Prince Consort in the 1850s and developed as part of the port of Liverpool. There is now a marvellous maritime museum and residential accommodation along the river, in a beautiful setting. Liverpool has one of the most marvellous water fronts in the world, and I have seen quite a few, including San Francisco. Liverpool has much to offer. We also have a heritage in music, whether it is the Beatles or the world famous Royal Philharmonic orchestra. Such aspects of our heritage need assistance, not only because they are part of the attractions of Merseyside, but because they are part of our economic development.

As chairman of Merseyside county council's economic development committee between 1981 and 1983, it was my lot to try to sell Merseyside. Many hon. Members will say that Merseyside has a bad image for this reason or that — quite unfairly, to a large extent. That is largely because we have in our area the motor car industry and the docks, which, nationally, have always been strike prone. One of my tasks was to consider how to attract businesses to Merseyside. If we are to attract not only workers, but investment, into Merseyside, we must have the attractions of the arts and culture that Merseyside has been able to provide so well in the past.

I appeal to the Minister not to get up and say, "Yes, the business community will provide." We hope that the business community will provide something, but it cannot provide all that is necessary. We on the county council always believed that tourism had a part to play in economic development. Indeed, when Sir Trevor Jones was leader of Liverpool city council under the Liberal administration, I told him that we would take over the tourism office near Lime Street station. We did that. We have much to offer in tourism.

According to the English Tourist Board, Croxteth hall and country park is one of the top 20 tourist growth points in the country. It needs assistance. I would welcome any contribution from anyone outside the House in the business community. I can see Conservative Members putting their hands in their pockets, but more than that is required. We need an administration with the expertise to enable the hall to be developed, and to enable the Philharmonic hall to remain open. It was under threat until only a few days ago, when the Minister made a statement and allowed it to go to the residuary body. We do not want the Philharmonic hall to go the same way as St. George's hall, which is a marvellous piece of architecture, but is now closed and serving no useful purpose.

I appeal to the Minister not to rely on the business community to help and sustain the arts on Merseyside. There is the danger of tobacco sponsorship, to which the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) referred. I sympathise to some extent. If we leave the business community to pick up the pieces after the abolition of the metropolitan counties, there is the danger of censorship in that those who pay the piper will call the tune. We do not want to see that happening. If the Minister

[Mr. Wareing]

takes up my offer and visits Croxteth hall, looks at some of the other attractions on Merseyside and talks to the local community, I shall be much obliged, and will assist him.

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): Is the hon. Member aware—I imagine that he is—that I was recently on Merseyside, when I had the chance to see a remarkable range of arts and museum facilities?

Mr. Wareing: I was aware of that, but the Minister has not been able to talk to many of the organisations in the community, and I should like him to do that. It is not just a matter of speaking to the leaders of a city council that is rate capped and in difficulties. If he were to come with me and meet members of the Croxteth hall community forum, and if he were able to talk to those working in Liverpool, he would learn a lot more about how they have depended upon Merseyside county council, and how they depend on public funds, despite the generosity of others.

I am sorry that I may not be able to be here when the Minister replies. I have passed a note to him, and I hope that he will understand. I look forward with great interest to reading what he has to say.

11.32 am

Mr. Tim Brinton (Gravesham): The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) has aroused my interest in some detail in speaking about patronage, and not sponsorship, of the arts. That is a perfectly laudable way of funding the arts, be it by the Earls of Sefton, the Government or local authorities. There is a difference between the Earl of Sefton and the Government and the local authorities, in that the latter are spending other people's money. The earl was spending his own.

Mr. Tony Banks: Where did he get it from?

Mr. Brinton: I may or may not dispute where he got it from, but he owned the money.

Mr. Wareing: May I now inform the hon. Member that the last Earl of Sefton was, indeed, the last Earl of Sefton? There were no heirs. When he left his property to the Liverpool city council, the council looked upon it as something of an imposition because it knew that it would have to use other people's money to provide for something that had been within the fiefdom of the Sefton family.

Mr. Brinton: I am grateful for that information, because it leads me naturally to the next point. Who will provide the money, and how will it be spent? I listened with great attention to the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) because, although I fundamentally disagree with almost every policy that he would support, he occasionally utters golden words, and golden words he uttered today. He said that funding of the arts by the Government should be an investment, not a grant, not a subsidy. He objected to those words—grant and subsidy—and so do I.

There is a good reason why the Government should think carefully about changing attitudes here, and perhaps even the name whereby funding of the arts is carried out. If it was described as some form of investment it might make a lot more sense, particularly for the performing arts. If there is investment in a business employing 175,000 people, to which the hon. Member referred, that business has to show that it is effective in using the investment. Hon. Members will have noticed that I have omitted the word cost, which is very often used to talk of cost effectiveness. Although that is one way of assessing the effectiveness of assessing the arts—and a good way in many circumstances—there are many areas in which sheer cost effectiveness would be brutalising and destructive and by no means the correct way of going about things.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham on his success with this motion. As he said, it presents many opportunities today. I am assuming that the word "business" in the title applies as much as to the individual business man as to the corporate body, and that the word "sponsorship", from the way the debate is going, refers to the idea of patronage. On that basis, I must confess that I have a known and inbuilt prejudice against the idea of subsidy and grant for the arts. I do not like it. I accept that a hefty contribution in support of the arts has to come from the Government.

There is another thing that I accept, and that it is that whichever Government may be in power in the next 10 to 15 years, it is most unlikely that there will be much by way of increasing sums of money available to be spent on the arts. That is why the motion of my hon. Friend is so important, because the money has to be found from elsewhere. That can be done only by increasing the incentives to individuals and businesses to invest in the arts.

I was a member of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts in the last Parliament, which produced the eighth report. That report made two specific recommendations, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham referred briefly, though not in detail. I should like to put those recommendations on the record again, as I believe that they show the way forward. Recommendation 55 of the eighth report stated:

> "Business companies should be exempted from tax on a percentage of their pre-tax profits for all donations to the arts."

Recommendation 59 in that report stated:

> "Donations from individuals to non-profit arts organisations up to 10 per cent. of pre-tax income should be tax deductible on an annual basis."

Those two recommendations were not made simply to find more money for the arts. If the arts are to thrive, we must obtain more participation and interest in the arts. If people find that they can invest individually up to 10 per cent. of their income and have that free of tax, they will become interested in investing in the arts. They will take an interest in what is happening in the opera, ballet, the museums and other aspects of the arts, and they will want to go along and take part in those arts. The recommendations are an enormous incentive to get people who perhaps do not know much about the arts to participate.

I sense that other hon. Members wish to speak, and I shall not delay the House for long. However, I should like to discuss what I would refer to as the moralistic issue of arts sponsorship, an issue which was raised by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East and by my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). They raised the issue of sponsorship by tobacco companies. I believe that the arts are a business. If business was to rule its conduct by moralistic priciples, world business would collapse as entrenched viewpoints—and I respect this view—against smoking, against the motor car being a killer, the dairy industry and alcohol being killers, would

all conflict with one another. The business man does not, on the whole, unless he has a particular hang-up, consider such moralistic aspects when conducting his business.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the hon. Gentleman really suggesting that there is no case for morality in business objectives? Is he suggesting that, to the average business man, ethics is a county south-east of London?

Mr. Brinton: I am not suggesting anything of the sort. I believe that the Government would be poorer, and our defence budget would be poorer, if the Government did not allow people to sell arms. I know that that is a subject of political controversy, but people who carry on business must have ethics about the way that they do that business. He who brings moralistic personal prejudices into his business is less likely to succeed in business.

There are those who believe the utter rubbish that people who smoke one or two cigarettes a year are doing harm to themselves. I accept that prejudice, but it should not intrude into their judgment on how the arts should be financed.

Another reason why I have intervened in the debate is that I wish to deal with another prejudice that is liable to cause considerable harm to future arts funding. This prejudice relates to the form of legislation going through the House. I refer to the private Member's Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) to amend the Obscene Publications Act 1959. Before your rise, Mr. Speaker, to call me out of order, I should say that I have no intention of arguing that issue now. I wish to make a point on funding. The report demonstrated that the BBC and the ITV had been spending £155 million a year on supporting the arts. It must be much more now. The only point that I wish to make—it is deadly serious — is that in that Bill there is an assumption in law that every television programme, whether it be shown at midday or midnight, will be watched by young people under the age of 18, and thus there is a real risk to serious arts programmes broadcast on public television. Those arts programmes support the arts to the extent that I have just mentioned. That is an important argument to consider.

We must create investment, incentive and interest—the three Is of the arts. I hope that today's debate will further stimulate the three Is and bring better funding and more success to the arts.

11.40 am

Mr. Gerald Bowden (Dulwich): I should like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) on introducing a subject which we often take for granted but which is nevertheless serious and crucial to this country's cultural and social life. The motion draws attention to the warm support that my right hon. Friend the Minister has given to the arts directly, and indirectly through sponsorship and other schemes. That will ensure the health of the arts in the future.

I had the great advantage of being brought up in the part of London in which I now live. I did not realise it at the time, but it was a great advantage to be young and relatively poor in London because one then looked around to see what was freely on offer. Museums, churches and other sights could be readily seen by those who had little money.

I have experienced a born-again approach to the arts by seeing them through the eyes of my children. I am sometimes taken and sometimes coerced to see the sights that they want to see. I have been obliged to look with new eyes at what is available. I have been seeing old sights through new lenses.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said that there was no such thing as a free lunch. I have come to realise that there is no such thing as a free museum, a free theatre or free arts. However it is described, someone has to pay for them.

The way in which my right hon. Friend has tried to draw attention to how changes can be made to ensure the health of the arts in the future deserves congratulation and support. We can no longer look to one source of funding —the Government, through the taxpayer and the public purse. We must seek a plural approach. We must seek funds from many sources to ensure the health of the arts in the future. There is something corrupt about funding the arts from one source only.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Newham, North-West in his place because I have mentioned this matter to him before. I recall him in his previous incarnation as chairman of the GLC arts and recreation committee. He was responsible for agreeing a donation to the Dulwich picture gallery. In 1983, the then Minister for the Arts was invited to the Dulwich picture gallery. I took him there and enrolled him as a friend of the gallery. He spoke to other friends of the gallery. When the matter was reported to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, then wearing his hat as the chairman of the GLC arts and recreation committee, he was said to be hopping up and down and threatening to withdraw a grant of £6,000 per annum which the GLC gave the Dulwich gallery.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Gentleman does me an injustice. He is aware of that because I have mentioned this point to him before. He should tell the House the rest of the story, which is that the visit took place at the time of the general election and the Minister walked into the gallery wearing a large blue rosette and made a party political speech. I subsequently received an apology for that from the gallery's director who said that he knew nothing about it and that he rather objected to the way his art gallery had been used as a party political platform by the Conservative party.

Mr. Bowden: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Many of the friends of the gallery object to the way that it has been used as a plaything by the GLC to which it threw money or withheld it. The blackmail that the GLC used on that occasion demonstrates the iniquity and corruption of having single funding for the arts. Although the GLC may have funded many good things, it has done it partially and in a way that is unhelpful to the arts.

Mr. Jessel: As a friend of Dulwich art gallery, may I say how grateful I am to my hon. Friend. No sponsorship of the arts could have been more effective than his sponsorship as the Member representing Dulwich. He obtained a grant of £25,000 for the gallery, which had a crucial effect on its work.

Mr. Bowden: I am grateful for that intervention. The part I played was small. I pay a small subscription as a friend of the gallery. It has a number of other generous friends. They give their services free so that the administration of the gallery is not a public or private charge. The friendship extends to manning the gallery

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bookstall and the other services that it provides for the public. That is not sponsorship, but it is another form of support and patronage which demonstrates that there are many people who have an interest in the arts who may not have a great deal to spend on them but nevertheless have time and energy which they can devote to propagating the arts. That has been the great strength of the Dulwich gallery.

The director, Giles Waterfield, has been mentioned. His dynamic leadership of the team at the Dulwich gallery ensured that it has become not just a centre of scholarship for those with a keen academic interest in the visual arts, in particular painting, but a popular place where schoolchildren can freely look at pictures and talk about them amongst themselves in a friendly atmosphere. The Dulwich community holds social events there, notwithstanding the disincentives——

Mr. Tony Banks: How much business sponsorship does it get?

Mr. Bowden: The question was asked from a sedentary position. I shall take pleasure in answering it without giving way. It has little business sponsorship, but it does not depend entirely on the sponsorship, the patronage and the client relationship which the GLC wishes to have over so many of the arts.

I hope that all hon. Members will go to the Dulwich gallery. I have no objection to anyone of whatever political persuasion going there. Honourable Members can go as my guests. I will take them there.

Mr. Banks: A free lunch?

Mr. Bowden: There is a good canteen nearby. I shall ensure that anyone I take will have the opportunity to become a friend of the Dulwich gallery. I do not mind what party political colour is worn.

I should like to linger longer at the Dulwich gallery. However, I must now turn to the Victoria and Albert museum. It is a friendly place that I have known since earliest childhood, and I find it reassuring that it now looks to the future with optimism and a positive approach. The artefacts and the items in that museum are familiar in my mind. The ambience and the architectural surroundings in which they are housed are something I have loved and known for years. It has become clear that museums do not consist merely of the items they house. Museums are businesses, institutions and houses, and they require upkeep. The upkeep often far outstrips the value of the materials that the museums display.

The Victoria and Albert museum has been facing a crisis. The expenditure necessary to ensure that it has a stable fabric to house the beautiful objects within it is a cause of great anxiety to those of us who know and love the museum. I am delighted to say that the dynamic director, Sir Roy Strong, with his new constitution and board of trustees, has found a pragmatic way to approach this. A great deal of opprobrium and derision has come from the Opposition about a decision to give the opportunity to those who go there to make a voluntary donation to the upkeep of that museum. There is no such thing as a free lunch, nor is there such a thing as a free museum, and those of us who go to that museum may feel there is a great advantage in keeping it there by making a financial contribution.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member is quite right: there is no such thing as a free museum. We already pay for the museum through our taxes and rates and I object to paying for it again. *[Interruption.]* I am in the middle of an intervention and I should not be drawn by other interesting remarks. We already pay through our taxes. Why should we pay again? Surely the hon. Member recognises that since the voluntary charges system has been in operation attendances have fallen off dramatically.

Mr. Bowden: I am always grateful for interventions from the hon. Member for Newham, North-West because they help my argument to go rather faster than I could make it go myself. Of course those of us who are taxpayers and ratepayers contribute towards the upkeep of the museum, but when we go there we might feel we are making a contribution to something that we want to see remain. There are those who come but do not pay taxes or rates here, the tourists. They feel they are receiving something of our cultural heritage and would like to make a voluntary contribution towards it. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham said when he was talking about Salisbury cathedral, many of us who have money in our pockets will willingly pay for the privilege of seeing what is there and we feel that that is the contribution we want to make. At the same time, the Victoria and Albert museum allows those people who have no money to go in without paying. The obligation is in no way represented in terms of moral pressure. The museum allows students, artists and those who want to go regularly to feel that they can go and see without being forced to pay.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned falling attendances. Taken on a long-term rather than a short-term basis, over the last 10 years attendances at the Victoria and Albert museum have doubled.

Mr. Tony Banks: Since the charges?

Mr. Bowden: Since the pickets are outside, since those attendants from the Science museum and the attendants at the Victoria and Albert museum have used their lunch breaks to go outside and try to dissuade people from coming into their museum. The miserable faces of the people outside trying to dissuade people from going into the museum, the faces of those who are there to discourage people from going in saying, "Don't pay", are in sharp contrast to the cheerful young faces inside the museum of people who say, "Come in. You can contribute if you like, and although we would like to have your money, you do not have to contribute." That is a contrast which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West cannot take.

The Victoria and Albert museum is finding a way to escape from the shackles of local authority and central Government funding, and it is doing it in a great way and deserves every support. That has its implications for an institution or a museum like the V & A, or the Dulwich gallery, or any other institution we care to talk about, because they have to direct their attention towards looking to somebody other than a Minister, or the chairman of the arts and recreation committee of the GLC, to find money. That requires a skill which is perhaps in line with business rather than scholarship.

In future the directors of such arts institutions will have to have fund raising talents rather than purely museum directing talents. That is not unusual in other fields. In discussions on the appointment of the head of many Cambridge or Oxford colleges, whereas in the past the

colleges would look for the most eminent scholars to fill the post, now they have to see whether they have the ability to chat up sources of endowment and support for the future. That has implications for museum direction which need careful consideration. The people who do it may not necessarily be the best scholars or the most pre-eminent exponents of a specific art form, but must be able to raise the necessary finance.

I hope that the Minister will take it as a thought for future appointments in which he may have a hand that perhaps a twofold directorship is necessary for our major art institutions. The director will have to give, as it were, the scholarship, the academic leadership to an institution which may be pre-eminent in the arts, and at the same time he should be able to give the business direction, drive and enterprise which those institutions need.

I welcome this debate and the contributions made to it. The debate has drawn attention to the need for a many-funded arts approach. There should not just be one source of finance. If there is funding from many sources, and especially from sponsorship, the arts will flourish.

11.58 am

Mr. Christopher Murphy (Welwyn Hatfield): I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) was true to his text by allowing a commercial break for his coming memoirs. I trust that he has already taken advantage of business sponsorship to ensure that they come out at a reasonable price for hon. Members. More seriously, I hope the House will take note of his wise words about museum charges. He speaks from experience, having been the Minister responsible, and despite all the academic arguments put forward by Members on both sides of the House about this, his practical experience should be heeded by all who have the interests of the arts and heritage at heart.

I welcome the growth in business sponsorship of the arts, and I should like to refer to the Second Reading debate on the Museum of London Bill, when I drew the attention of the House to a report which I had the privilege of preparing for the Council of Europe on private sponsorship of the arts. The report was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of that body, as my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) was kind enough to mention. On the Third Reading of the Museum of London Bill I was able to confirm that the Council of Ministers had received the report favourably. Hon. Members need not be alarmed, because I shall not outline the points I made during those debates again. Perhaps I could summarise by saying that recognition of the value of commercial sponsorship is now well established and that there is an increasing desire to stimulate it further.

Far too often in the past it has been a case of private sponsorship versus public funding, rather than private sponsorship and public funding. Now, more realistically, plural financing is becoming the accepted norm. Nevertheless, it must be recognised that reservations have long been held about the perceived "problems" of private sponsorship. It is claimed that it may lead to a decline in the willingness of public authorities to spend public money and that there will be a diminution of control by elected policy makers. It is claimed that artists might be less well protected and their artistic freedom might be threatened. It is claimed that the amount of private funds might vary with economic conditions and lead to problems of continuity in financing arts projects.

Reservations have also long been held about the perceived "problems" of public funding. It is felt that political intervention may lead to a lack of continuity of cultural policy, and that it can be highly inflexible, with the earmarking of funds for special purposes. It is felt that there is no guarantee that public subsidisation of the arts favours low-income or minority groups. It is also felt that the amount of public funds may vary with economic conditions, and also lead to problems of continuity in financing arts projects.

Many of the fears from both sides are found to be common, and perhaps the plural financing of today will assist in overcoming such prejudices of the proponents of both views. The extension of the practice of commercial sponsorship is dependent upon a financial and fiscal climate, compatible with, and favourable to, that approach. Like many of my hon. Friends, I look to the coming Budget for further moves in that important direction.

At the same time, it should also be recognised that the phrase "commercial sponsorship" covers a number of different aspects. There is business sponsorship—funds given as a consideration for a service provided by the arts organisation, usually some form of advertising or marketing facility, in a business relationship. There is corporate patronage—the provision of a donation, which is equivalent to a private gift, with no expectation of direct or indirect return.

There are tax advantages which the Government make available to companies, whether they are involved in sponsorship or patronage, and which appear to be crucial in encouraging the growth of this sector. There is also the involvement of the Government in stimulating such activity, as with the business sponsorship scheme, which can provide a great fillip, as well as advice to both potential sponsors and receivers, as its publications have shown.

I conclude my speech on the motion proposed by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham, my former Member of Parliament, by asking that particular attention be paid to his reference to the need for arts bodies to market themselves more effectively. It is imperative, if commercial sponsorship is to develop further, that the expected recipients do not sit back in idle anticipation, nor sit up and beg. Instead, they must capitalise on their unique talents and records of achievement and present that to potential sponsors and patrons.

They must also capitalise on the insight into private sponsorship given by the former secretary-general of the Arts Council, who said:

> "I think most sponsorship of the arts is done under the general umbrella of corporate rather than commodity advertising and corporate public relations is an increasingly important activity in the lives of many companies and that is an area in which arts sponsorship becomes most useful."

With that advice, with its own special advantages, and with a Government dedicated to such advances, business sponsorship will surely flourish as another glory in that oft-referred to arts garden.

12.4 pm

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): It is always a great pleasure to follow a speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy). He and I were Conservative candidates in east London twice in

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1974, and we saw the stuff of politics and the arts there, and the renewal of that acquaintance on the Floor of the House is always nice.

The arts have a fundamental function of their own in inspiring man to new thought and activity beyond himself, and they have a civilising effect on all of us. One has only to read William Golding's book "Lord of the Flies" to be reminded that there is the philistine and perhaps an element of fallen man in each of us, even in the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan), who is shaking his head. That element needs to be constantly civilised in the way that arts, religion, and other such activities do.

I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I am sorry that he is not in his place. He drew a false parallel between sponsorship by the GLC and by business. He said that it was equally legitimate for the GLC to push its name and political interests as a Labour-controlled authority by showing sponsorship on posters, advertising events, as it was for business to push its commercial interest. The two cases are wholly different. Business wants to advance the interest of potential customers in its products. For the GLC to do the same thing on party political terms is wholly wrong, and must be when it is done with taxpayers' and ratepayers' money.

Mr. Buchan: The criterion for sponsorship is that there should be satisfaction that the sponsors' support was for the purpose of promoting their name or services. The GLC is concerned about exactly that. It wants its name to be known—after all, it is under attack—and also the fact that it is providing services for the whole of London. That fits exactly into the category of sponsorship. Perhaps the Minister will come forward with matching money for the amount put by the GLC into halls and theatres.

Mr. Greenway: I have a high regard for the hon. Gentleman, but that was a vain attempt to defend the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, whose theory is indefensible. On his own admission, the hon. Member agreed that the GLC was party political, and he has to take the consequences of what he said.

Mr. Gerald Bowden: Is not the misuse of the word "sponsorship" clogging the debate? We do not say that the London borough of Southwark sponsors the emptying of dustbins, because it is its duty so to do. The GLC has a duty to foster and encourage the arts of London, so therefore it is not sponsoring.

Mr. Greenway: I take that point. It was the duty of the GLC to fund the arts, but it was not its duty to try to extract strong party political advantage out of it. That was indefensible, and not only because it was done crudely and at taxpayers' expense.

The hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) touched on an important point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee), who I congraulate warmly on initiating the debate, when he went for tobacco sponsorship. I speak as a non-smoker—I have not smoked for many years. However, 700 of my constituents work at Gallaghers in Northolt. They are good honest people, and make a product as well as they can. They take the greatest exception to false arguments such as those that we have heard. The claim that my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham is damaging his health seriously because he smokes two cigarettes a day cannot easily be proven.

The move towards prohibition of tobacco advertisements by the Labour and Liberal parties and other bodies is dangerous in a free society, because people must be free to choose whether or not they smoke. I do not, and would not advise them to do so, although I have no qualifications for doing that. In a recent conversation with me at Northolt they pointed out that valium, alcohol and drugs are addictive and can cause cancer and damage equally as destructive as that caused by tobacco.

Although I have personal reservations about anything that induces people to smoke, people's freedom to choose is crucial in a free society and should not be violated. My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham need not worry about obesity, which he mentioned in relation to tobacco. He is one of the fittest hon. Members in the House, which we know from the way in which he spirits about physically and in every other way. I commend him not to worry about his weight.

I was a member of the Select Committee which produced that massive and special report in the previous Parliamant on public and private funding of the arts. I am the sole surviver of that Committee to sit on the Committee of this Parliament. We travelled widely before making our recommendations, two of which have been mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton).

My hon. Friend did not, however, mention the most crucial recommendation, which was that the Minister for the Arts should also be the Minister responsible for tourism and a member of the Cabinet. There could be no more worthy member of the Cabinet than my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts. His membership of the Cabinet, because of the extra heavy responsibility of tourism being added to his duties, would enhance the profile of the arts and tourism and bring the two together in a sensible way. It is absurd that tourism should be considered by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and be divorced from the inspiration of tourism, which is the arts.

Mr. Brinton: I was my hon. Friend's colleague on the Select Committee in the previous Parliament. Does he agree that one problem that we encountered during that comprehensive inquiry was the fact that responsibility for the arts was split? Films come under the Department of Trade and Industry, but television, for example, is the responsibility of the Home Office. I am against creating bureaucracy, but it is necessary urgently to gather the arts together under one banner.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and he enforces my point by underlining it. Tourism and the arts must be brought together. There is no need for greater bureaucracy if the Minister for the Arts also becomes the Minister responsible for tourism. It would be valuable and stimulating if the arts and tourism came together. It is in the interests of the Minister and the Government for him to put that argument strongly to the Government, as I am sure the Select Committee will continue to do.

I welcome the fact that business sponsorship for the arts has increased from £500,000 in 1976 to about £20 million this year. All concerned are to be congratulated on that splendid figure, which represents a substantial commitment to the arts by people in business. It shows the

potential of a greater commitment in personal and financial terms. Tax incentives for businesses to contribute or sponsor the arts is essential.

I was in the United States about 10 days ago.

Mr. Buchan: A jolly?

Mr. Greenway: It was a short visit and hard work, as was the visit by the Select Committee of the previous Parliament to consider how tax incentives for businesses worked. We could achieve in Britain what they have achieved in America if we could set such contributions against tax at up to about 10 per cent.

Large businesses would tend to go for national sponsorship, because it would give them a high profile, and they have the necessary resources. Smaller businesses would become involved in local activities. In my constituency, the Hanwell arts festival, founded by Fred Secombe—brother of Harry Secombe—about 14 years ago, has never had a sponsor. It has always survived on its own resources, but it would be greatly helped if it had a sponsor. Also in my constituency the Academy of St. Mary, of which I am proud to be president and which is directed so admirably by Bowles Bevan, would benefit from an injection of local business funds.

Mr. Tony Banks: How much business sponsorship does it receive?

Mr. Greenway: We are considering the matter. However, we are proud to be independent. We must take into account the way in which people feel about these matters, but it is certainly a possibility and may be of future benefit.

Arts contributions and sponsorship should be on the agenda of every business. If tax incentives were written into the Chancellor's Budget, as I hope they will be, perhaps at every business meeting arts sponsorship would be an item on the agenda to discuss what they would do or to review what they were already doing. That would maintain a high level of business interest in an important area.

I believe that hon. Members can help in achieving sponsorship. In my constituency I put on two pensioners' concerts a year. Business contributes £1,000. Each concert costs £500, and 600 pensioners attend. They have a fine afternoon. Sometimes, I introduce the concert. I raise the money and I organise the front of house and lighting. The artists are professional and the concerts are professionally produced. The distribution of tickets is done by the community, and it is a wonderful community occasion, sponsored by local business.

That is an admirable way of furthering the arts in the heart of the community where it matters. If business sponsorship can relieve a grim winter for pensioners and senior citizens, that is an extra good thing. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newham, North-West would take a leaf out of my book and try to do something like that without using taxpayers' and ratepayers' money, for which he has such a penchant.

Mr. Banks: I am not as good on the spoons as the hon. Member.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman should get working on it.

I plead for more public and business support for the music hall, which is an area of the arts which is almost entirely forgotten. The music hall has been popular in Britain for generations. It has given wonderful entertainment, but it has no home. The people concerned in that art form must hawk around to obtain a hall or somewhere to perform. The music hall form of art is very popular. It receives no public money, and scarcely any sponsorship money, but it must have both if it is to survive. It is very much in Britain's interests to keep the music hall going, because it is a highly popular art form and deserves to be supported.

Business sponsorship could be developed much more than it is now in schools and local colleges. Why not use school-industry links, which are being created across the country, and certainly in my constituency, in Industry Year, to carry out much more arts sponsorship? Businesses could do more than go into schools to get across their business message. They could put up money for concerts and for theatrical productions, including plays. I suggest that links between industry and schools would become almost organic by such a device, and I hope that the matter can be investigated. I shall try to achieve it in my constituency.

Business could sponsor orchestras, buy musical instruments for pupils and help to complement the work undertaken by local authorities. While my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham was attending the Reynolds exhibition last night, I was attending a concert in Brentside High school in my constituency. It was mighty fine. We heard works ranging from the Beatles to Tchaikovsky and Mozart — very different, but dynamic and beautifully performed. More support from business for schools which undertake such attractive programmes would help considerably.

I urge businesses to sponsor specialised galleries and exhibitions, as has happened with the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, which I have had the pleasure of visiting, as no doubt have many of my colleagues. It is devoted to science, especially flying and space. One can see exhibits including a model of the first plane flown by the Wright brothers, the first vehicle in space, Skylab, the vehicle that landed on the moon, and much more. It is supported by business sponsorship as well as by public money, and it draws tourists from all over the United States and the world. People of all ages can see the superb scientific achievements of the United States, and the exhibition is an inspiration to more research and to a greater interest in science, with all the potential that that has for countries and communities. We could usefully achieve support for specialist institutions and their establishment where they do not yet exist. Of course, I do not overlook the excellent work of the Victoria and Albert museum and our other specialist institutions, but their scope could be widened considerably.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham mentioned the problems of religious institutions in maintaining the staff that they need to keep going. I sympathise with what he said. He did not mention Westminster abbey, but he said that Ely cathedral has had to introduce an admission charge to cope with the wear and tear on the cathedral and to pay for the staff that it needs to supervise its many visitors. Ely attracts about 1 million visitors a year, but Westminster abbey attracts at least 2 million people a year, so how much greater must be the problems of Westminster abbey?

It cannot be right that the congregation and the Church Commissioners alone must carry out all the repair work that is needed to enable those 2 million visitors to see such

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a superb building. Some public money or private sponsorship is needed, and I wonder whether London firms would consider donating money to Westminster abbey or to St. Paul's cathedral to enable those institutions to carry out repairs. The same could be true of religious buildings throughout the country. Indeed, I do not restrict my suggestion to cathedrals and beautiful churches; other institutions need sponsorship.

I conclude by emphasising the fact that 12 million visitors to Britain spent £5 billion last year. That expenditure has inspired the largest growth of jobs in Britain in recent years. I hope that, as part of making life more vital and more cultured, local and national community festivals on a grand scale, such as the Salzburg festival, and on a smaller, but nationally renowned scale, such as the Aldeburgh festival, can be established from John O'Groats to Land's End. Local people and larger institutions should look to business sponsors for financial help with such arts festivals.

Our efforts to establish the arts, new art forms and interest and activity in the arts — be it play acting, singing or making music—must be valuable in an age when people have more leisure time. We should pay special attention to the fact that unemployed and retired people could spend their time usefully and happily in that way, and this debate will help substantially towards that end.

12.27 pm

Dr. John G. Blackburn (Dudley, West): I offer three congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee). The first is on his good fortune in coming first in the ballot. During my seven years' service in the House, that honour has signally eluded me. Secondly, I congratulate him upon the excellent subject that he has brought to the Floor of the House for debate. Finally, I congratulate him on his excellent and constructive speech. It reflects the greatest possible credit on him and the constituency that he serves with such great distinction in this House.

If a nation loses its vision of the arts, my considered judgment is that it has lost its vision. It plays a very important part in enriching the society in which we live and the quality of our life. I have spent a great deal of time in the House working for the furtherance of the arts, and it is those features that have always provided the greatest challenge.

State support has created a foundation upon which business sponsorship can flourish. The way forward is by means of plural funding. This important aspect of financing the arts must be coupled with sound management and value for money. In the financial sector of the arts world, value for money is sometimes forgotten. However, that is the cornerstone of the financing of this important industry.

Having been away from the House for two years on account of illness, I found that I was attracted by some of the arguments of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). I gaze across the packed Opposition Benches to see whether he is in his seat, but unfortunately he is not. However, I was impressed by his comment that business sponsorship for the arts is, in his judgment, the icing on the cake. I am attracted by that argument. But it is some icing, and it is some cake. The cake is £100 million and the icing is £20 million. As this debate was opened by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham, who is the Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners, may I suggest to him that if he had the gift of prophecy—which he may well have—he might prophesy that the figure of business sponsorship, which amounted to £500,000 in 1976 and which amounted to £20 million in 1985, will be doubled in the next three years.

I was particularly impressed by the plea on behalf of the Military School of Music at Kneller hall by my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). He blew his trumpet loudly on that issue and the House supported him entirely. I am surprised by the amount of talent that surrounds me on these Benches, for I was equally impressed by the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims). He told us in glowing terms of his dedication to the Royal Choral Society. My hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham may have blown his trumpet loudly about the Military School of Music, but he did not say that the sponsored concert in St Mary's church which raised £12,000 for the Save the Children Fund had, as the most important item on its programme, a Mozart piano concerto, whose soloist was my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham. I find myself on these Benches in the position of a musical sandwich, with the Royal Choral Society on my left and a distinguished concert pianist on my right.

In all honesty I must pay a most warm and generous tribute to Sir Roy Strong, the director of the Victoria and Albert museum, for his sponsorship of the arts. In his presentations to the British public over two decades he has shown enterprise, immense care and marketing skills of a high order. The disciples of art owe a considerable debt of gratitude to him. He has created a new code, a new vision that we should be wise to follow with the same spirit of dedication as he has betrayed.

The unchallengeable figures which have been presented to the House by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham concerning business sponsorship are encouraging. They reflect the greatest possible credit upon the business world for the encouragement it has given to the arts. Perhaps on this occasion someone should pay a tribute to the business community for its continuing and improving support of sponsorship of the arts. It is fitting that in this debate a very simple but sincere vote of thanks should go from this House to those companies which have had the vision to support the arts.

I claim, as a result of my six years's service as secretary to the Conservative parliamentary committee for arts and heritage, to have become a dedicated disciple to both aspects of the arts. The sponsorship of today would not have been brought about without the encouragement and outstanding contribution, to which I pay tribute, from JP Getty the second. I pay tribute unashamedly to the Sainsbury brothers for their contribution for the extension of the National gallery. The sponsorship of the arts makes this an exciting period, but more important we will be leaving something for future generations because of the charity, kindness and dedication of sponsoring businesses.

I do no believe that the word "profit" is obscene. Through the medium of responsible business and profitability many benefits will come to the world of art. The two examples I have quoted are a fair and honourable example of that.

I should like to take the debate away from the London area because there have been few contributions from Members beyond that mystical line—north of Watford. I wish to refer to sponsorship in my native city of Manchester. It is a source of encouragement and inspiration to know the outstanding work that has been done by the friends of the Manchester city art gallery. They have raised over £1 million through business sponsorship to enhance the collection.

I will quote—I think it is worthy of the attention of the House—some of the things that have been done in sponsorship of the arts. I hope that the House will be generous with me when I mention these figures, which are not authentic, but I hope that it will accept them. It is my view—I am as honest as that—that when one goes to some of the art galleries, which I do, probably only 25 to 30 per cent. of the collection is ever on show to the public. Perhaps 10 to 15 per cent. is part of a travelling exhibition for an artist, but the remainder is never shown to the public.

The concept that has been introduced through business sponsorship in Manchester is quite simple. The gallery will invite a company to sponsor the arts and pay a donation. For that donation one of those paintings will be hung in the reception area or board room of the company. Indeed, it is one of the most thrilling experiences to go into a department store and see a work of art on display. Business sponsorship is generating revenue with which it will be possible to enhance the Manchester city art gallery.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend is describing a most interesting scheme. Could he tell us about its scope, about the size of the businesses involved and about the amount of money that is put up, as it is a scheme which we might talk up in our constituencies?

Dr. Blackburn: If asked to give £1,000 to support the arts, a modest family company will almost certainly decline, but if it is offered an opportunity to display a work of art for a donation of £200 or £300, a well of good will is usually revealed. Such arrangements must, of course, be subject to proper security provision.

There have been exciting developments in Dudley, which I have the honour to serve and represent here. We are blessed with the brightest jewel in the crown of the west midlands. We have an outstanding castle which celebrates its 900th anniversary this year. The restoration work of the past five years has been undertaken by the Conservative-controlled council under the outstanding leadership of councillor Edmonds and has been fully supported by the business community in the form of sponsorship.

Because of local companies' affection for the town in which they operate and have made their wealth, they have invested in the borough's heritage and arts. The heritage is ours, but we have a solemn duty to pass our treasures on to future generations. I trust that I reflect the cry of the world of the arts when I commend to the Treasury the critical importance of encouraging the financing of the arts through incentive schemes, which I hope will be presented to the House in the Budget on 18 March and will form part of the Finance Bill. A single gift should be offsettable against income tax or corporation tax.

I am attracted by the debate on the financial structure of supporting the arts. There was much merit in the well-balanced argument advanced by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West about the opportunity that might be created by relaxing the payment of value added tax for the performing arts. I should like to pursue that avenue of thought.

Perhaps I might take the House a little further north to my adopted city. I have spent most of my life in a little fishing village on the west coast called Liverpool.

I am especially impressed with the recent outstanding campaign to save the internationally famous Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra, which has produced for the music world Sir Malcolm Sargent and John Pritchard. We recently had the opportunity of listening to the skills, gifts and craft of music through the baton of Sir Charles Groves. The orchestra has been saved by the intervention of my right hon. Friend the Minister. Never in my service in this House could I ever pay a greater, warmer and more sincere tribute to him than I do today. It was his work that brought about at least a temporary reprieve, not only for the orchestra but for the hall itself.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Mr. Thornton)—almost single-handedly—quietly and constructively made representations to my right hon. Friend that resulted in that remission. It is all that is good for the performing arts. The days of constructive examination and pleading by my hon. Friend reflect the greatest possible credit upon him and the constituency that he represents with such dedicated loyalty.

However, there is no medium or long-term future for that orchestra or hall unless they attract business sponsorship. The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) was correct to bring that matter to the attention of the House this morning. I know from my experience and knowledge of the city of Liverpool that many companies have hitherto demonstrated their faith in the arts in Merseyside. I refer especially to the wonderful business sponsorship of the Royal Insurance company.

The future for the arts in this country is good, but the plural funding by business must make it outstanding. It will be a source of pleasure, of education and, as has been pointed out time and again in the debate, of revenue from the tourist industry. These things will prosper even more under the Government's sound policies.

This debate is historic. The entire House is indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham for bringing this subject before us. When the pages of history are written about the financing of arts in this country, a chapter will be centred around this debate. It is because of that that I once again pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham.

12.48 pm

Mr. Norman Buchan (Paisley, South): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn). In the unhappy event of my funeral rites taking place, I cannot think of anyone who I would rather have reading them. If the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) began with a baroque libretto, the debate has ended with an oratorio. Even when the hon. Member for Dudley, West speaks of his native Manchester, it sounds a little like Handel putting some notes to the doings, derring or otherwise, of the ancient Israelites.

This is an important debate and we must pay tribute to the hon. Member for Wokingham who has a deep interest

[Mr. Norman Buchan]

and genuine concern in this matter. We thank him for the opportunity that he has provided to discuss this matter today.

The Minister will appreciate that the Opposition cannot accept this debate as a substitute for a full-blown debate in prime parliamentary time as opposed to the quietness of private Members' business on a Friday. We shall, therefore, not cease applying pressure for a full debate on the future of arts funding. Nevertheless, the hon. Member for Wokingham has raised a matter of importance and relevance and I wish to ruminate a little around the situation. The hon. Members for Dudley, West and for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) reminded us of the importance of these matters. The hon. Member for Ealing, North referred to the civilising influence of the arts and the hon. Member for Dudley, West saw a new code and a new vision in recent events. I wish to deal with some of those recent events.

The Opposition welcome the development of business sponsorship, but we do not regard it as a substitute for proper public funding and we cannot offer comments or congratulations on it without expressing our deep anxiety about what is happening to public funding of the arts both by central Government and local authorities.

The hon. Member for Dudley, West said how noble it was that a new code and a new vision had come out of the recent action by Sir Roy Strong. His use of the word "betrayed" was perhaps a Freudian slip. Most people actively concerned with museums and galleries and above all the curatorial staff regard it as a kind of betrayal to bring in charges in museums such as the Victoria and Albert.

This is related to the question of private sponsorship as there can be few more direct forms of private sponsorship than asking individuals to pay to enter a museum or gallery. The man from Islington with two or three children receives no matching funds when he pays to enter the Victoria and Albert museum. The betrayal is the greater in that it has given the green light for other museums to follow suit. This week it has been announced that the geographical, zoological and natural history museums are to follow that practice. Two of those museums, like the Victoria and Albert, are in south Kensington. People used to be able to take their children to the three museums in south Kensington on a Saturday, but triple charging will make that impossible. It is no use — indeed, it is dishonourable—to say that exceptions will be made for the poor. That is almost the most obscene aspect.

The results of such a policy are clear. In November, following the introduction of this most pernicious form of private sponsorship from individuals, attendance at the Victoria and Albert fell by 20 per cent. compared with the previous year. It is difficult to obtain accurate statistics, but it is generally accepted that the fall in attendance was about 20 per cent. In December, attendances were down by 47·8 per cent. to just over half the level for the previous December.

Mr. Jessel: Will the hon. Gentleman roundly condemn the pickets who are there to deter people from going into the museum?

Mr. Buchan: I strongly applaud the pickets. Their action has recovered some of the conscience of the museums. To use a word of which the hon. Member for Dudley, West is fond, it is the noblest of behaviour. The pickets' message is, "Please enter, but do not pay"—and they are absolutely right. They are not preventing people from entering. They are telling people the truth so that, in the words that others have used today about cigarette sponsorship, people will have the freedom to choose. "Freedom" is a strange word. Sometimes it changes shape on the Floor of the House. The freedom to choose is given in relation to those charges.

In January, there was a drop of 38·7 per cent. in attendance. There is nothing unusual in that. We knew what would happen; we told people what would happen. We have gone through the experience already. It happened in 1973-74, under the stewardship of the present Prime Minister, then the Secretary of State for Education and Science. By the way, the museums that are charging this week are primarily educational museums. Those charges lasted three months—we abolished them when we came back to office. During that time there was also a drop of between one third and one half in the case of the V and A.

It is peculiar that, when there is a proper interface between the community as a whole and educational institutions, and when we are developing the educational aspects, it is at that very point that a price barrier is imposed. That is vicious, nasty, reactionary, and should be changed. Therefore, I cannot accept the development of the new code and the new vision, nor do I think that this is a praiseworthy action for the Government of the nation. The hon. Member for Dudley, West is putting me into a rhetorical mood. It is not praiseworthy that our National gallery has to be saved by the intervention of Paul Getty or the Sainsburys. All the acquisition money that the National gallery got last year was £2·7 million, which would have bought exactly one quarter of the canvas of the previous Turner painting that was sold. It could not afford that one picture. No one would carve it up into four, except perhaps this lot in the Conservative Government, during their privatisation programme.

When we say that we are in favour of private sponsorship, and when we say, as is said by Conservative Members, that it should not be a substitute for public funding, the difference is that we mean what we say. It is no use the Conservative party saying that private funding is not a substitute for public funding if at the same time the cuts in public spending impel the museums into adopting private sponsorhip methods, and charging for admission.

This week the three museums to which I referred are saying that they deplore the fact that they had to take that action, but that otherwise they would face a deficit of £1·5 million in the year, and it might mean a loss of jobs. They think that by the end of the decade the deficit will be £2·5 million. Therefore, it is not as if the museums are choosing that method as a new code and a new vision. They were impelled by Government action to do so.

Private sponsorship is seen by some as the icing on the cake, but there is a difference when it becomes essential to save some of our best national institutions. It is shameful that the National gallery—in one of the major capitals of the world — has to be saved by the intervention of Paul Getty. I take little pride in that.

I liked the speech of the hon. Member for Ealing, North and what he was doing last night. It is the most harmless activity I can think of for a Tory Member of Parliament to listen to a Mozart concerto. I congratulate him. He

referred to a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). He said that we are in favour of business sponsorship, but do not let us conceal the fact that it is bringing a good deal of benefit to those who are doing it. The Government are saying that under the present scheme they want to make it possible for private firms to sponsor the arts, and will encourage them by bringing in matching funds. Private firms accept that that is part of business activity. That does not, however, show that they are being generous, kind or charitable, which were the phrases used about Mr. Paul Getty. Though I accept that Mr. Getty has money to spend and does not wish to make a profit, business must make a return.

For sponsorship to be operated at the present time, the administration of the scheme must be satisfied that the sponsor is getting a significant return from the arts organisation in terms of overall publicity. In other words, it must be worthwhile and compare with tax relief on advertising. Incidentally, the firm would get entertainment for its guests, free tickets for performances and so on.

That is the idea put forward for such sponsorship. There are other reasons but they do not include the Paul Getty option for sponsorship which means anyone with money can give it. I would guess that Mr. Getty would do that even if matching funds were not going to the National gallery as a result of his action.

Mr. Brinton *rose*——

Mr. Buchan: I will give way shortly, but I wish to finish my point. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West asked why the GLC — which also funds concerts and, in a sense, must advertise them at the South Bank—should be prevented from saying that a concert was being peformed in a GLC sponsored and maintained hall.

The hon. Member for Ealing, North said that such sponsorship would be party political. Of course, the GLC is not in that sense party political. It is a governing body. When the Prime Minister speaks for Britain in Brussels, she speaks for Britain. The Opposition do not like the way she speaks but she is speaking for Britain and, I would hope, not being simply party political.

When the GLC helps to support an orchestral event by providing a hall, it is speaking for the GLC which includes, heaven help us, Tories as well. There is nothing party political in that. On the contrary, the GLC knows that it will not receive any money in return as it is not a business and is not lashing out free entertainment and tickets when concerts are held. However, the people of London pay for such concerts and are entitled to know that they are supporting them.

Mr. Greenway: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman and I will agree on this matter. The difference between business sponsorship and GLC sponsorship is that the former usually comes from money owned by the company. The business is entitled to the tickets and other privileges through its sponsorship. However, even though the business is sponsoring the arts for business purposes, it is promoting the arts. The GLC is also promoting the arts and we must not forget that the GLC carried out enormous arts promotion when it was Tory-controlled. In those days we had to endure Socialists, as we do now. The difference between then and now with the GLC is that the GLC's promotion of itself on its arts promotions ticket is a political effort.

Mr. Buchan: I have no doubt whatsoever that cigarette companies' promotion of snooker and other sports is intended to promote the company's name or its service.

Mr. Brinton: This is a simple matter. The hon. Gentleman is totally confusing patronage with sponsorship. Patronage is Paul Getty and the GLC, while sponsorship is the tobacco company he was talking about.

Mr. Buchan: I agree with the hon. Gentleman but I am not confusing the two. I have had a long correspondence with the previous Minister and I am sure that the present Minister will have read the correspondence on that point. It forms a thick file. Would the British Broadcasting Corporation object to a concert being staged under a firm's patronage and not being able to mention on the radio that the concert was under that firm's patronage? Of course, the BBC should not be part of advertising.

Mr. Greenway: The hon. Gentleman is missing the point. The point is that the GLC is using tax and ratepayers' money for party political advertising. That is wrong as it amounts to Labour party advertising.

Mr. Buchan: That applies to the business man. We are paying through the tax relief they receive on their advertising. To that extent, every ratepayer and taxpayer helps to pay. We all know that. We should not dodge the point. All taxpayers and ratepayers pay when they go to theatres or museums or private meetings of the Royal Academy, as has been said. Last time I saw Joan Sutherland I had to pay £37. That was a great deal of money, but it would have been twice as much if the people in the street did not help to keep down the cost.

The background was brilliantly explained by the hon. Members for Dudley, West and for Ealing, North. The background is not that of a Government massively dedicated to the public service but one who think that most public expenditure is bad. There is no such thing as a complete host of lost souls. There are some saved souls here today, even within the Conservative party and within this Government, with their drive to a Victorian philosophy. There are some people who recognise the importance of the arts and I welcome them here today. They must accept that the Government's drive has been against the concept of the public weal and public expenditure. The thrust to privatisation is part of the philosophy that allowed the Prime Minister to introduce charges 10 years ago. It is part of a philosophy that allows the Government so to squeeze the arts that museums have this week decided to charge for entry. We see the philosophy in the flogging off of oil and gas. There is a beautiful poster which states:

"If you go down to the wood tonight, you're in for a big surprise—they've flogged it."

The philosophy extends to forestry and water. The same now applies to business sponsorship. We should not assume that business sponsorship is an attempt merely to put icing on the cake. On the contrary, it is part of the making of the cake. That is why we are worried.

If part of the Government's philosophy is to move everything towards privatisation, including the arts as far as possible, it follows that there will be a squeeze on the public sector. There is a squeeze on the public sector. I do

[Mr. Buchan]

not wish to go into all the figures. We shall do that when we have a major debate on public funding. The Minister is aware that I do not completely accept the normal definition of funding and the so-called increase that there has been over the last few years.

In the Department a great deal of artistic accountancy is being delivered in some of the answers to our questions. When the Government came into power in 1979 they cut arts funding by 2 per cent. in their first Budget. After winning the election in 1983 they again cut arts funding by 1 per cent. I recognise the amount of money that is being put into the arts this year. It was to try to replace the money lost through the local government abolitions. Thank goodness it is not just central Government who support the arts. We wish to devolve the support as far as possible throughout the country. Local authorities largely support the arts.

We must understand some of the effects of privatisation, in particular on the arts that have been supported by local authorities. I had a meeting with all the arts organisations in Birmingham last week. Without exception every one of the administrators of arts centres, theatres and orchestras said the same thing: that more and more the pressure was upon them to spend all their time searching for sources of funding. One of them said he had nine different sources of funding. That is because the squeeze on public funds is so great and has now increased because of the collapse of local authorities. The work of artistic administrators has now been diverted to this continuing quest for funding. Not only does that make the arts suffer; it puts an immense sense of anxiety and crisis on the arts in general in Britain. Every one of those administrators expressed that anxiety, and none of them knew whether he would still be operating in a year's time.

We know about the more significant and prestigious centres of art. We know about Sadler's Wells and the Liverpool Philharmonic. My guess is that we will save Sadler's Wells because even this Government would not want the shame of allowing Sadler's Wells, with its background of the Ballet Rambert, the London Contemporary Dance company, and the Festival Ballet, to close. It is too well known nationally and internationally, and one way or another we will save Sadler's Wells. But it will cost money to do that. The way of saving it is interesting. Northern Telecom has contributed £50,000. I have read that company's handout and it is interesting to see the number of artistic organisations that it supports, but Northern Telecom emphasises that it does that because it is good for business. That is the term the company uses and we are pleased that it did contribute £50,000.

Another £100,000 will come from the Arts Council by way of increased grants to the three basic companies that use Sadler's Wells. That £100,000 must come from other arts bodies. If the Arts Council is giving it in this concealed way to the companies using Sadler's Wells so that they can pay a higher rent, what contortions we are getting into. The Arts Council gives the three companies a bigger grant so that they can pay a higher rent to the theatre. That is the kind of position we are being forced into and, by definition, that means £100,000 less to the rest of the arts.

The more prestigious centres of art will be saved, but at the expense of the less well known and less important which are in trouble and will go down. None of us knows the fullness of what funding will come forward, but we do know that the present replacement money for the arts resulting from the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC is dramatically short of what it should be. The Government estimate that £20 million will be necessary for the arts and an additional £17 million for films and museums, making a total of £37 million. They said they would not pay the full amount because the successor boroughs and councils should support the arts. Therefore, the £20 million to the Arts Council was reduced to £16 million. That was shown to be desperately wrong and that the real shortage was of the order of £44 million.

The Government came forward with an additional amount and pushed the total arts figure up by £25 million replacement funding. That meant that in place of a £44 million shortfall, brought about by the abolition of the metropolitan counties and the GLC, £25 million went to the Arts Council by way of its present grant. Any figures that Government Members look at will show, either in cash or in real terms for this year, that that £25 million, which is a replacement for other public funding, must be taken into consideration. That remains £19 million short of the proper estimate. The Arts Council said that it could not deal with £9 million of that because it covered cross-county border items and capital expenditure. Therefore, it said it was short by £10 million. My calculation is £19 million short and the Arts Council's original calculation was £19 million. Its present calculation is that it is £10 million short.

All of this is making assumptions about the ability of local authorities to meet the demands upon them. There is no means to decide how much they can give to replace the missing funds. It is a sick joke to argue that local authorities and boroughs should be able to replace that drop in funding. The Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra needs money. I am making no comment on the nature of the council, but it is hammered for money. It may be argued by Government Members that that is a result of its own actions, but that does not help the arts. How has Liverpool the money to replace any shortfall resulting from the abolition of the metropolitan county councils? In Liverpool, the metropolitan county met a large proportion of the cost of the arts.

Mr. Jessel: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) to deliver such a long speech about abolition when we are supposed to be discussing business sponsorship?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I have heard nothing out of order. A wide debate is permissible on this fairly wide motion.

Mr. Buchan: I thank you for that ruling, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been careful to remain precisely within order. I am talking about the problems that face the arts at the moment, and the possibility that a portion of their funding can be borne by private sponsorship. I am linking the theoretical proposition about private sponsorship to the Government's arts policy. In Liverpool, it is a sick joke to think that the council can replace the money lost through the abolition of the metropolitan counties.

The first argument about Sadler's Wells was that the local borough should be able to support it, but the local borough has eight different theatres, of which five are fairly significant, to support. By definition, the inner

London boroughs are supporting more artistic ventures than the surrounding boroughs. Camden has similar problems, such as the British Theatre Association library. The council sees this as a national institution and asks why, just because it is placed in Camden, the council should have to support it. I dare say that the Minister has already discovered how much fear and anxiety there is.

That is the background against which the argument about private sponsorship has been brought forward. We are in favour of private sponsorship, but we are not in favour of it being used to buttress, or be a replacement for, public funding.

Two aspects of this are of particular importance. One is the argument as to whether it is an infringement of freedom if the Government, the state, society or the community say that certain forms of sponsorship are not acceptable. The hon. Members for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) are against cigarette advertising, but the hon. Member for Wokingham said that he saw nothing wrong in it. The hon. Member for Ealing, North backed him up by saying that the hon. Member for Wokingham's two cigarettes a day probably do not do him too much harm.

That is not the problem that we are facing, nor is it the problem of including advertising on alcohol as well. On this commodity, there is a universal medical acceptance of the danger of smoking one cigarette, and the considerable danger of heavy smoking. I see no justification for the Government spending taxpayers' money in campaigning to prevent people from smoking —not just cutting down to two—while at the same time saying that they will not only allow the advertising of cigarette smoking, but will let it be used to sponsor the arts, and even pay matching grants if necessary. That is an abomination and as an argument shows such incredible illogicality that I would have thought that not even this Government would have worn it.

This is a difficult subject, and I have also come under criticism for making plain my view. If and when I replace the Minister on the Government Bench, I shall seek to dissuade cigarette smoking being used to sponsor the arts by way of dropping matching funds. I follow the lead of my hon. Friend the shadow Minister for Health, the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, who made that point in relation to sport. If we cut production, society has a duty to ensure alternative work. One of the next Labour Government's first considerations, in the attempt to revive the decaying economy with which we shall be saddled, will be to make a conscious effort to ensure that before we make decisions in relation to defence or social good, we carry out our responsibility to replace the jobs lost.

In relation to sponsorship, I wish to mention the curious incident of the Sheffield Crucible, when NALGO, encouraged by myself and previous Ministers, including Lord Gowrie, adopted trade union sponsorship. Until mid-summer, trade union sponsorship was not receiving matching grants. In an exchange of letters, Lord Gowrie, made it clear that he would like to match the grants and he interpreted the rules of sponsorship in such a way that although trade unions are not a business, they equally qualify. However, they must follow the same criteria of promoting their names and services.

NALGO, a trade union in the public sector, sponsored "The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui". There was a display in the foyer showing cuts in the public sector which were destroying jobs of NALGO members. The display was refused for matching funds by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts, the appropriate body to consider those matters, on the ground that it was party political. I have seen the text of the display, which deals with cuts in water services, the privatisation of electricity, health, local government, universities and gas—all the things that the Government have been unscrambling.

But NALGO is a public service union. To qualify for a grant it must promote its name or services. The name was accidentally promoted by the Government's action following the ABSA recommendation to refuse matching grants. Publicity was provided, but not the publicity that the union wanted. The display promoted the name. It encouraged people to join. If the union promotes services it should receive the grant. The union promotes the protection of workers' conditions and jobs. That is an absolutely legitimate trade union objective, and the reason why the Government allowed ballots to decide whether to have a political fund to campaign.

NALGO has no political fund. But the ruling given says that its activities in relation to protecting jobs in the public sector is a legitimate service. NALGO's action in relation to Government cuts — it originally called them the "Thatcher" Government and then deliberately cut that out —is precisely related to promoting services. NALGO's action should not have been defined as party political, especially as NALGO is not affiliated to any political party. It was shameful and the wrong decision, because by its nature that union can do no other than deal with matters of Government policy and that of other public bodies. If that is defined as party political, NALGO is put at a disadvantage in relation to other unions. The matter should be reconsidered. I seek a meeting with the Minister, and I apologise for my failure to meet him this week. But we must settle the matter. Although NALGO has had plenty of publicity because of what happened in Sheffield, I do not wish the Government's decision to act as a disincentive to other trade unions. Just as Conservative Members seek business sponsorship, I want the Labour movement to support the arts. However, it will not be encouraged to do so if ICI, IBM or the tobacco companies can obtain matching funds, but trade unions cannot.

I accept that private sponsorship represents an extremely useful but limited support for the arts. It is clear which arts it tends to support: the prestigious, the glamorous, the well-known and, above all, the bland. It does not support the new, the adventurous, the unknown or the scurrilous. Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were scurrilous in their day; the latter especially would have received no sponsorship from those companies today. Therefore, their support distorts the development of the arts. We see the effect on companies that are threatened by the collapse of local authority funding, because local authorities have tended to support smaller, locally based organisations.

Last year, at a conference about sponsorship of the visual arts organised by the Tate gallery, a spokesman for an international conglomerate said that it preferred to

"sponsor exhibitions with which it was comfortable"

—a beautifully bland term. In other words, it would not sponsor exhibitions that might hammer a little at or question the role of private enterprise. That is why a picket was established outside the Tate gallery objecting to United Technologies sponsoring the Stubbs exhibition. At least it let people know that the source of the money was military expenditure.

[Mr. Buchan]

The hon. Members for Wokingham and for Ealing, North played an honourable part in the production of the eighth report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts. It made several recommendations on tax relief for private sponsorship, which should appeal to the Conservative party. I am in favour of a good deal of that. I do not wish to bludgeon British taxpayers into paying for companies' sponsorship of the arts, but if we persist in placing so much of a premium on the importance of private sponsorship, it should be done intelligently and properly. Some of the limits that have been put on the acquisition of objects of art, for example, are nonsense. Some of the report's suggestions for improvements in tax matters, therefore, should be carried out. That extremely important report, which is four years old, has never been properly debated in the House. I hope that the Minister will use his influence to obtain such a debate so that we can at least demonstrate the common ground that we share on some aspects of the arts, even though we may quarrel about others.

I welcome the debate, but I repeat what I said at the beginning: it must not be considered a substitute for a proper and full debate on the crisis in the funding of the arts.

1.28 pm

The Minister for the Arts (Mr. Richard Luce): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) on drawing up the motion. He has done the House a great service by enabling us to have a constructive and fruitful debate. In his excellent contribution he said that he hoped one day to write his memoirs. I hope that he will, and that he will regard all the speeches this morning as so distinctive and remarkable that they will feature in his memoirs. If he goes so far as to publish his memoirs, I hope that he will qualify for sponsorship under the Government's business sponsorship scheme. All too often, however, the discussion is about particular cases—there has been no shortage of them today—and not about broad policies. However, it is important to pause occasionally and try to see the wood for the trees.

Particular cases are important. I recognise that some of them have surfaced in the debate, but they should not be used to detract from the main issues. As the motion indicates, one of those issues is the extent of self-help in the arts. This is central to the future health of the arts in Britain. Business sponsorship, marketing and all other means of increasing incomes through a plurality of funding are vital. The Government are, and will remain, a major source of arts funding. We have pledged ourselves to maintain arts provision, and that is a clear commitment. One of my first acts was to increase the Arts Council's sum for abolition from £16 million to £25 million. I am glad of this, but there is too ready an assumption that wherever there is a demand for growth it must be financed by the state. Even now the state is not the biggest funder of the arts, nor should it be. It ranks about fourth—after the general public, the local authorities and the film and television industries. That is not a bad ranking.

The Government, on behalf of the taxpayer, have an important role to play, but the future health of the arts cannot rely on them alone. It must depend on plural funding, from obtaining funds from a variety of sources. My hon. Friends the Members for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) and for Dudley, West (Dr. Blackburn) emphasised those points effectively and strongly.

Before we look at the various sources of funding, it is worth while to reflect for a moment on the state of the arts in Britain. There are those who would have us believe that the arts are in a dire state, in a state of constant crisis. There are those—the hon. Member for Paisley, South (Mr. Buchan) does it from time to time—who spread an atmosphere of doom and despondency, and the word "Armageddon" is sometimes used.

This is absolute nonsense. Of course abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan counties has caused some uncertainty about the transitional period, and some of this has surfaced in the debate, but the abolition problems are now being resolved by the Arts Council, in conjunction with the local authorities. Only this week I have announced further developments on Merseyside.

I endorse most strongly a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham about the arts being for the many rather than for the few. The real state of the arts is actually remarkably healthy, as even a cursory glance at attendance figures and at Britain's international standing in virtually every artistic field will show. West End theatre is booming. British Film Year has been a huge success. We are strong in all branches of music. Our writers are pre-eminent and Britain's younger contemporary artists are beginning to win the same high international reputation as their predecessors—for example, Francis Bacon, David Hockney, Henry Moore and Lucian Freud. All of these artists have many achievements to their name. Furthermore, attendance figures at museums and art galleries are good and they are growing. The crafts movement, which has not been mentioned today, is becoming increasingly popular. This record of success in the arts is based, not upon monolithic state support, but on a diverse and flexible base of funding from a variety of sources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham referred to the Government's commitment to the arts, and at the same time the hon. Member for Paisley, South referred to devastating cuts that were taking place in many areas of the arts.

The plain fact is that we are committed to keeping up support for the arts. If we look at the overall picture in terms of Government funding of the arts, we can see that it has gone up by over 10 per cent. in real terms excluding abolition—25 per cent. if we include it—from the year 1979-80. The heritage has not been discussed much today, but the Government have shown their strong commitment to it, and indeed my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment recently announced that the National Heritage Memorial Fund would gain an extra £10·5 million for the tasks that it undertakes. The Government's commitment is present and we will maintain our support for the arts. That is fundamental to the Government's approach to this issue.

The Government will maintain their support, but a central part of Government policy is that they should be one amongst many sources of funds. The plurality of funding is extremely important, and within that term I include both sponsorship and the management ability of individual companies to help themselves. Self-help is an important and necessary discipline. It ranges from the efforts of individual art companies to increase their box

office to business sponsorship and to private patrons who are generously helping the national galleries and the British Film Institute's new museum of the Moving Image.

We should remember that those who draw their funding from a variety of sources are much less vulnerable to changes and cutbacks, for whatever reasons. Plurality of funding is a better guarantee of stability than dependence on a single source. We should also remember that new sources of funding provide much greater potential for growth and development.

It is against that background that I shall deal with business sponsorship. Many hon. Members have contributed today, and I listened with great interest to the enthusiasm of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy). I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Paisley, South and his colleagues, and indeed the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud), support the broad policy of encouraging business sponsorship. I welcome the climate of the debate that we have had today.

I am delighted with the recent increase in the level of business sponsorship. When the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts was founded in 1976, it estimated that the overall level of arts sponsorship was around £0·5 million. It is now estimated at about £20 million. Much of this increase has come in the past three years, with the strong encouragement of this Government.

Here I wish to say what a significant role my predecessor, Lord Gowrie, played in this connection. In 1984 he committed £1 million of his budget to start the business sponsorship incentive scheme—matching new or increased business sponsorship—but he reinforced this with speeches up and down the country publicising the benefits of sponsorship. In the 18 months since the scheme started, £1·7 millon of Government money has attracted £5 million of business money—a total of £6·7 million of new money for the arts. As the House is aware, I have announced an increase in the budget for this incentive scheme to the tune of £1·75 million for the year 1986-87.

I am pleased that the Select Committee, which produced its report in 1981-82, and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) referred —he was a member of the Committee, as was my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway)— gave strong support to business sponsorship and that support was across party lines.

I disagree profoundly with those such as Mr. Januszczak, who wrote an article in *The Guardian* of 15 February, and who reflects the views even of some hon. Members who think that sponsorship goes only to the safe. He used the phrases the "Mozart factor" and the "London factor". To some extent, the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, who told me that he cannot be present for the winding-up speeches, echoed that view. It is not that he opposes sponsorship but that he expressed anxiety about its nature.

We should analyse what is happening under the sponsorship scheme. No less than 70 per cent. of the business sponsorship incentive scheme's awards have gone outside Greater London. New sponsorship has been found in Merseyside, Newcastle, Cornwall, Orkney, and other places where most people would have thought it unlikely. The enthusiasm and perseverance of local people have paid dividends in every area.

The geographical diversity is matched by the diversity of the arts and crafts that have benefited from sponsorship. Awards under my scheme have gone to modern dance, avant-garde art from Japan in Oxford, community arts in Durham, mystery plays in Lincoln, jazz in the south-west and Cardiff, international folklore, on which the hon. Member for Paisley, South is very keen, in Billingham, sculpture, pantomime, playwriting competitions, and printmaking. I noticed that there had been strong sponsorship at the Battersea arts centre in London when I visited it recently.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) told us that he has been singing in the Royal Choral Society for 30 years with great distinction. I am happy to announce that the Royal Choral Society has been awarded £4,000 under my scheme to match the Braun sponsorship. If only the rules of the House allowed my hon. Friend to display his voice here, he would no doubt have been able to encourage still further sponsorship. My hon. Friend also mentioned the Churchill theatre in Bromley. I much enjoyed a recent visit to the theatre and was deeply impressed by the range of facilities and management there. I strongly hope that it will persuade more businesses to sponsor productions there.

I should deal with the argument of those who are hostile to any private support for the arts. I find no evidence of sponsors attempting to influence the artistic content of the work that they sponsor. The allegations should be dispelled.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North spoke about sponsorship in his constituency, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West spoke of magnificent sponsorship support of the Manchester art gallery. The more we talk about such news, the better, and the more that people realise what can be achieved under the scheme, the better.

A great deal of the credit for the growth in sponsorship must go to ABSA, which administers the scheme on my behalf and the regional administrators who advise businesses what to expect and ask bodies how best to present their case. Since the scheme started, 180 businesses have tried arts sponsorship for the first time and 190 sponsors have increased their commitment. I hope that the first-time sponsors will have valued the experience and found it worthwhile in commercial terms so that they will want to continue sponsoring.

It is important to stress the mutual benefit to be derived from sponsorship. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West seemed to decry that. The basis of the scheme is that the businesses also derive advantages in advertising and marketing terms in this great joint venture.

I have done my bit since taking over as arts Minister to keep the momentum going. I have added £300,000 to this year's budget for the scheme to keep pace with demand and to ensure that the money does not run out. No one who met the criteria of the scheme has been disappointed. For next year, I have increased the budget to £1·75 million.

Mr. Buchan: Will the Minister refer to the NALGO position?

Mr. Luce: I shall certainly respond to the hon. Gentleman's point later.

There have been outstandingly generous acts of patronage—gifts made purely for love of the arts, with no thought of a return. It is disinterested giving as distinct from the interested giving that is business sponsorship.

[Mr. Luce]

Examples of that are Mrs. Jean Sainbury's recent most welcome gift to the Royal Opera House and Miss Aileen Woodroffe's bequest to the National Art Collections Fund. Much is also happening at local level with both companies and individuals supporting their local arts.

I repeat that the Government will stick to their commitment to maintain support for the arts. However, against that background of increasing interest and demand by the public, sponsorship and private funding can and must provide the fuel for expansion.

Mr. Buchan: Is the Minister really saying that private sponsorship will provide the fuel for development and expansion, so that, in effect, he is announcing a standstill on public funding?

Mr. Luce: No. I have made my position absolutely clear. There is no change. The Government will continue to provide the basic support and commitment. But when looking to growth and expansion—which is the exciting prospect for the future—other sectors should play the leading part. The Government will maintain their basic support. Indeed, I have already demonstrated that in real terms our support has risen beyond our manifesto commitments.

Mr. Buchan: The Minister repeats the Government's commitment to maintain their support. There is already a tapering off in future planning. I understand the Minister to be saying that he is relying on the private sector and sponsorship funding for growth and expansion, while public funding will remain at a standstill. Indeed, total public funding is planned to decrease by the taper.

Mr. Luce: The hon. Gentleman misinterprets what I am saying. I repeat that the Government will maintain their commitment in line with inflation. The figures show that over the past seven years we have more than done that. However, I think that the fuel for the exciting prospect of expansion must come from the private sector, of which sponsorship is an important part.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) raised questions about Merseyside. This is not the occasion to go into detail about how the problems with transition after the abolition of the metropolitan counties will be handled, although this week I have announced what I hope will be helpful news. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that, when I visited Merseyside the other day, I announced a scheme to support the Festival of Comedy in Liverpool—£25,000 to match the £25,000 sponsorship of the DER television rentals company. That is an example of sponsorship working in all parts of the country.

Almost every hon. Member who spoke raised the question of tax reforms—my hon. Friends the Members for Wokingham, for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel), for Chislehurst, for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) and for Ealing, North, together with Opposition Members. I noted with care what my hon. Friends said on that matter.

Much as I would like to have charge of the Budget, it is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and it is clearly not for me to comment on speculation as to its contents. I stress, however, that I am keen for the arts to grow by attracting additional private funding in line with the 1983 manifesto commitment to examine ways of using the tax system to encourage further growth in private support for the arts and heritage. Much has already been done in this respect. The reduction of the period for covenanting from seven years to four was a contribution. I have listened with great interest to the views expressed today, and I will ensure that my right hon. Friend is aware of the views of the House in this regard.

It is right that I should spend a little time on sponsorship by tobacco companies and trade unions as both subjects have been raised today. Strong views have been expressed about tobacco sponsorship by the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East, my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst, and the hon. Member for Paisley, South. I also listened with care to the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham on this aspect. I believe that it is principally for the arts organisations themselves to decide what sponsorship to accept and whether they feel it right or wrong to invite tobacco companies to sponsor arts activities. Such sponsorship represents about 10 per cent. of all private sponsorship, but it must be a matter for the arts orgainsations to decide.

Mr. Freud: I do not argue with that. Our argument is about whether it is right to match the amounts contributed or to give one third of the amounts contributed by tobacco companies, bearing in mind that this enhances the image of the tobacco industry.

Mr. Luce: Clearly, I do not feel that it is wrong to facilitate the prospect of tobacco company contributions being matched, as I allow it under the present scheme, but at the end of the day it must be for the arts organisations to determine whether it is right. In a free society it is right that that freedom should be given to those organisations and I feel strongly that we should proceed on that basis.

Mr. Buchan: If the Minister has the right to decide not to match money contributed by a trade union in relation to its services, why should he not make the same judgment in respect of another body and its services or commodities?

Mr. Luce: That is slightly different.

With regard to the proposed NALGO sponsorship of the Crucible theatre in Sheffield, my predecessor rightly announced that unions should be eligible under the business sponsorship incentive scheme in the same way as businesses provided that it was genuine sponsorship—that is, a payment made for the purpose of promoting the union's name, products or services. The application by the Crucible theatre for an award in respect of support from NALGO was rejected by the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts purely on the ground that it did not meet the criteria laid down by the scheme but was intended to promote a political viewpoint. I strongly supported the ABSA and said that it would be unacceptable for taxpayers' money to be used to support party political purposes in that way. Had a business been allowed to take part in a sponsorship scheme, and then moved into the foyer and indulged in a major attack on the Labour party, I know precisely what the view of the hon. Member for Paisley, South would have been. We devalue and destroy the credibility of the ABSA scheme if we allow that to take place. If unions satisfy the criteria, I welcome their participation.

Mr. Buchan: The point is that NALGO is a public service union. There is no means by which it can defend its members, their jobs and the services that they provide, other than by defending them against a privatisation

process that would lose them jobs. NALGO would have done that with a Labour Government. Believe me, NALGO is not the strongest and most powerful supporter of the Labour party. The Minister is wrong. The union was defending the jobs of the workers.

Mr. Luce: I have explained why I am convinced that it was right not to allow that sponsorship. It did not stop the play from taking place. The criteria must be satisfied, and I believe it would be wrong to use taxpayers' money in that context.

Encouraging sponsorship, patronage and other private sector contributions is equally important for our national museums and galleries. Here too we have more than kept up the general level of public funding: indeed, recurrent and capital funding of the national institutions has increased by 19 per cent. in real terms since 1979, but further growth must come from outside, and museums must be consumer-oriented.

Patronage, for example, is growing, not only in the big gifts such as the immensely eye-catching and generous gestures towards the National gallery by Mr. Getty and the Sainsbury family, but in many other gifts. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley, West referred to that. Many museums such as the Imperial War museum have appeal funds to which patrons make important contributions.

Business sponsorship is increasing for the museums as well as the performing arts. Within the past week Pirelli has announced £250,000 for a garden at the V and A, and ICI has pledged £300,000 towards exhibitions at the Science museum. There are endless examples of the way in which such sponsorship is increasing.

But let us not forget the visiting public. Visitors support museums in their shops and restaurants, the trading profits of which make an important contribution. I want to make it as easy as possible for each museum or gallery to raise revenue for its own benefit. I pay tribute to those who have started to do so effectively. Sir Roy Strong at the V and A is one among many of those who have taken important initiatives. That is why I have signalled a new regime for the treatment of receipts.

My proposals do away with the deduction of a year's forecast receipts from the museums Vote, and with the prohibition on carrying over surpluses from one year to the next. Instead, museums will have grants in aid which do not deduct increased receipts forecast for future years; and a facility to carry over unspent surpluses. Those proposals are in response to unanimous recommendations in the report of the Select Committee on Education, Science and Arts and I am now consulting the parliamentary Committees on the detailed proposals. Let me emphasise once again, however, that the purpose is not to replace public by private funding. It is instead to provide an opportunity for growth, and I am confident that the museums will seize it.

The contribution of the paying public to the arts as a whole is the most important of all. As I have said, the number of visitors is growing at a great pace, and we have seen the expansion of the arts in many areas. There is a big paying public out there if the right incentives are offered and the right management followed. The effect of even small increases in the box office can be dramatic in turning around the trading position. That should be a challenge to every management.

One other aspect of the debate that has been touched on is the important part of the motion that refers to marketing. I say this as a former marketing manager. My hon. Friends the Members for Welwyn Hatfield, for Gravesham and for Dulwich (Mr. Bowden) all referred to the fact that the contribution that the paying public make emphasises the importance of marketing. This is a crucial aspect of the debate. Marketing means looking at what people need and want, and how it can be provided. It applies to the subsidised as much as to the private sector. I am firmly convinced that there are still many lessons to be learnt. The turnround in the fortunes of the London commercial theatre owes a lot to the marketing efforts of the Society of West End Theatre, with its ticket schemes and market research. British Film Year, against the odds, has seen a growth in cinema audiences for the first time in many years as a result of a marketing drive.

These are two examples from the independent sector. I visited Kendal yesterday and saw further examples at the Brewery arts centre and the Abbot hall art gallery, where there is a thrusting marketing policy.

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Luce: In fairness to other hon. Members, I think that I ought to proceed a little further with my speech.

I know that many subsidised theatres and public museums are trying hard to improve their sales. I am in touch with the Arts Council and others about what more might be done, and we shall look at ways of encouraging marketing as much as we can. I am glad to say that it has already been possible to support some very worthwhile initiatives in this area through the business sponsorship incentive scheme.

All these are steps in the right direction. They point to a growing awareness that, to succeed in self-help, selling one's product is the most important tool of all. The examples are there, the markets are there, and the disposable income available for the arts is expanding. Expenditure on theatres, sporting events and other entertainment — excluding cinema — still accounts for less than 1 per cent. of normal weekly income. In some income groups it accounts for very much less. A small increase in that margin of expenditure — to say 1 per cent. or 1·2 per cent. — would mean a great improvement in the finances of many arts bodies. The opportunities are striking, and if the right approach is adopted a great deal more could be achieved.

The record of arts sponsorship — where growth has been continuous and dramatic — speaks for itself. I shall continue to encourage it by all the means that I can. The arts are a successful industry, and their expectations — fuelled by past and present Government support — are growing. They are also, I believe, a great power for good in society. Therefore, it is up to all of us to see that they are not starved of resources.

That is not simply a matter for Government. Indeed, it would be wrong for the Government to monopolise arts funding. It is far better that the arts pursue a mulitiplicity of ways to growth, in which self-help is the motto. Efficient management and a greater priority to marketing are the keys.

There are many examples of economic success in areas where the arts have helped themselves. We need only look at the explosion of small television and video companies

[Mr. Luce]

following the setting up of Channel 4. The turnround in the fortunes of the theatre, the success of British Film Year and even the success of the pop music industry are examples of how the flair for marketing has succeeded. These examples have common factors. They have marketing know-how, energy, and flair. They have seen a need, and have moved to meet it. They are also risk takers, with pared-down management.

There are important lessons for the arts as a whole. I do not say that the arts should not be subsidised, but they should be efficiently managed and well geared to the public need. We need to persuade people to support the arts because they value them artistically and because they provide special enjoyment. They demand high skills of management, presentation and judgment, as well as artistic integrity. The consumer market is growing and the arts are in a good position to claim their share of that growth.

There are lessons there for all of us. Arts funding is a partnership in which we must all—central Government, local government, businesses, consumers and, above all, the arts bodies themselves—play our part. It is for that reason that I am immensely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham for the opportunity that he has provided for me to discuss this issue.

2.4 pm

Mr. Laurie Pavitt (Brent, South): I apologise to the House for not being present during all of the debate. I want to make only a brief intervention, as I do not wish to detain the House for long.

The Minister said that the attraction of extra business money to the arts would enable more people to participate in and enjoy the arts. People who go to the theatre, opera or ballet need to be able to hear what is going on. I wish to pay tribute to a well-known firm in Oxford street—I shall not give its name because I am not advertising or doing a television commercial — which has done an enormous amount for the deaf. There is no point in having empty seats in a theatre when there are a growing number of elderly people who would continue to go to the theatre if they could hear.

The House has had the privilege of having an electronic loop for nearly 10 years. That firm has been installing loops. I recently had the privilege of opening one in the heritage area of Leeds castle. As a result, people who are hard of hearing can now go around Leeds castle. People who go to the Duchess theatre, the Royal Festival hall and the Barbican can now hear. It is not just the subvention of funds to the companies and buildings that is important. People who wish to attend have been helped by the electronic loop and the infra-red system, which have been installed at the expense of the companies involved.

I hope that that is something the Minister will encourage with his matching scheme. There is a lack of that aid. People like me who love the theatre can continue to buy tickets for a long time, but we will not do so if we cannot hear a word of what is being said.

The Minister was kind when we discussed Sadler's Wells recently. There is great anxiety that it will continue only until the end of July. I understand that negotiations are continuing. The all-party British-China group is worried, because Sadler's Wells was to have a promotion of Chinese dancing in October. It will be sad if it does not take place.

The Classical theatre in my constituency, which is a little "on the fringe and way out", will be in danger when the GLC is abolished, as will the Arts theatre, which is bringing a complete show from Kingston, Jamaica, in March. Such events stimulate the arts.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Wokingham (Sir W. van Straubenzee) on introducing the motion. I feel sure that the Minister, who is one of the most friendly men in the House, will take back some of the ideas that he has heard and will continue to twist the arm of the Chancellor of the Exchequer as much as possible. We look forward to hearing the Budget speech, when the Chancellor may have one arm twisted a little behind his back, not just by the Minister, but by many others.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House welcomes the growth in business sponsorship of the arts and believes that everything possible should be done to encourage arts bodies to market themselves more effectively.

Social Work Training

2.8 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the fact that some 70 per cent. of workers in residential social service establishments have no formal social work qualification; observes that the inquiry into the Beckford case criticised the lack of clarity and specialisation in the training of social workers concerned with children; sees that the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has put forward radical proposals for changing courses leading to the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work; questions the priorities and objectives of current and proposed social work training; and seeks an assurance that a further opportunity will be given to debate the subject before any major changes are introduced.

I speak partly as an individual and partly as the chairman of the parliamentary panel for the personal social services, which is taking an interest in this important matter. The matter is not trivial in numbers—there are about 181,257 staff employed by social services—or powers. As the report on the Beckford inquiry put it:

"After only two years' training, and scant acquaintance with child abuse in practice, a social worker has the power—judicially sanctioned—to remove a child from its parents for a long time, perhaps irrevocably".

It is not a trivial matter of public anxiety.

There have been more than 20 inquiries into child abuse over the past 13 years. That is partly the result of greater provision, and it should be compared with the increasing number of inquiries into hospitals for the mentally handicapped. It is an indication of a growing understanding of the problems. It is not a trivial matter in terms of public interest, because, as the population ages and more and more people end up in residential care, the biggest factor in determining whether our mothers and fathers and aunts will enjoy a dignified and properly stimulating old age is the quality of the residential care staff.

All is not well. As an example, let us look at the Beckford case. My motion is slightly inaccurate, because in fact over 80 per cent. of the staff in residential and day care settings are unqualified. If anyone bright enters that vital field, he is urged not to stay too long lest he should blight his career prospects. I wish not to be pejorative, but to be constructively exploratory.

The public perception of the social worker is confused. He is looked upon as a do-gooder, a frightening authority figure, a mediator with other services, an ally or an opponent. That perception, of course, depends partly on where the public are standing at the time and partly on the role of the social worker at the time. Those perceptions arise partly because society as a whole cannot make up its mind whether it wants social workers to help police society for bad families, to relieve it of personal neighbourly responsibilities to the unfortunate, to dispense public charity, or to ensure that public charity is not misused. All those attitudes exist.

Many people have two consecutive views, and all social workers know how vital it is to be trained to understand that the people they are helping today will feel hostile to them tomorrow. That is because when people have got through a crisis they feel acutely embarrassed and ashamed for having told the social worker so much about their personal anxiety. That comes out as hostility. Social workers are trained to perform on behalf of society an astonishing diversity of complex and demanding tasks, often at personal risk of physical or pychological injury.

The history of social work development is one of gradual progress from a handmaiden role to other professions to one of a fully-fledged profession with control of its own entry qualifications, training and certification. If I had more time I would quote the minorities report to the reports of the Committee on Medical Auxiliaries, because it put that case well. That professional status is once again under attack and the reasons for that are, first, the ambivalence in the public attitude to social workers—an attitude that has been fuelled by rare cases of disaster—and, secondly, the persistence of the extraordinary belief that medicine is somehow a uniquely superior profession. I do not know whether that is because social workers deal mainly with those most in need, while doctors deal with everyone in the population, whether it is a consequence of the length of training of doctors, or because doctors have better developed disciplinary procedures.

A striking example is contained in paragraph 2:2 of the Minister's consultation letter on the Disabled Persons Consultation and Representation Bill, where he explains:

"There would be considerable difficulties in defining a statutory provision for the scope of a representative role in the National Health Service in the context of the professional relationship between the doctor and his patient."

The implication is quite clear, that the professional relationship between a social worker and a client is a totally different animal. I do not understand the reason for that view.

There is confusion about training and now a demand for professional decisions to be second guessed by courts, as exemplified, for example, in the Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Westbury (Mr. Walters). The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work has been debating training since 1982 and has now proposed radical changes. First, it proposes a minimum period of three years. Secondly, it proposes one qualifying award in social work, not only to merge the certificate of qualification in social work and the certificate of social services, but to cover all staff. Thirdly, it proposes two routes—one employment based and one college based, both with fieldwork placements—and the new award is to be separate from awards given by universities and colleges.

There is a frightening amount of confusion surrounding these proposals. The central council seems to believe that it has wide support, and it is true that, by and large, the professional organisations support it. One would expect that—longer training helps to boost professional status, control entry and enhance the negotiating position, as well as to improve the quality of service.

However, there is much evidence that the universities are opposed to the proposals. Because of my unexpected success in the ballot, I have not had time to collect all the replies to the letters that I wrote on behalf of the parliamentary group to every university school of social work. Some of the replies have come in. It is fair to say that the central council is already deeply concerned about its relationship with the universities. Leeds, London and Brunel have now taken their last social work students, Chelsea college went out of production in 1981 and the courses at Surrey and Glasgow are under threat.

The head of the largest school in social work, in Scotland, has just written to me. His letter says:

"You are indeed right in supposing that if the proposals currently being put forward by the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work were to be implemented, it would

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

cause the greatest difficulties for universities. Indeed, I have to say that these proposals have been opposed by almost all of those teaching social work in academic institutions and by their organisations. As I am sure you know, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has repeatedly stressed the importance and value of universities continuing to provide social workers with vocational training and the present proposals will hardly assist this."

Make no mistake—social work without university entry and research would cease to be a profession, and the public would suffer as a result.

There are other elements in this anxiety. The trade unions are not entirely satisfied. The Association of University Teachers is deeply worried, and not only about resources. The National and Local Government Officers thinks that the proposals are positive in general, but claims that the service unions are so strongly opposed to internship that the proposal made for that needs to be re-examined. The proposal for three-year training is welcomed by some, but passionately opposed in its present form by others.

The Beckford inquiry was unequivocal. It said that three-year training is indispensable and:

"We are convinced that nothing short of a period of three years is required for the professional training of social workers, of which a larger proportion than at the present should be devoted to specialist areas of knowledge."

The present state of social work training is worth a comment. Social workers have to cope with more than 30 main Acts, with subsidiary legislation, plus guidance from the DHSS and local policy guidelines. At the moment they spend some 20 weeks in college over their two years. This means that they will have perhaps one day on welfare benefits, four and a half hours on academic work on disability, and perhaps as much as 12 hours on mental disorder. That is hardly an impressive catalogue of the time available.

Such confusion plays into the hands of those with other axes to grind. At a recent meeting, Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools claimed that it saw no clear case for a third year of training, and unless and until the profession is clear about its priorities the huge expansion of resources that the central council's proposals will require will not be found.

There is also the question whether we agree with the Seebohm recommendations, properly applied. Seebohm argued that a basic grade worker should be able to work with a whole family, on the sensible ground that if there are several social workers visiting one family the opportunity for confusion and manipulation either by the family or the social worker is enormous. However, it insisted that basic grade workers should be able to call on more specialist help.

On the other hand, do we agree with the Beckford inquiry, which suggested that training should be turned on its head so that it starts with specialist training and, if people want to widen their interest, they can have a bolt-on module after qualification? We would be barmy to lengthen the training course until we know what we want it to produce. Two things are clear. First, as our population ages and as we press on with care in the community programmes and emptying our ancient institutions, and as pressures in inner cities grow and the rate of change in our society accelerates, leaving more people behind, the demand for social workers who know what they are doing and in whom we can have confidence will grow. Every one of us has an interest in this. Secondly, more resources will be needed. The House has a proper and jealously-guarded interest in the allocation of resources.

I hope that in the short time available to me I have said enough to justify the terms of my motion and to persuade the Government that not only do we need better training for social workers, but that it would be appropriate to allow Government time to debate any changes that may be made in a matter so close to all of us here and in the constituencies.

2.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): It is with much pleasure that I take the opportunity to contribute to the debate initiated by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), not least because he was so admirably brief. He made his case with fluency and efficacy, but that is not surprising given my hon. Friend's long experience and deep knowledge of the subject and the important contribution that he makes as chairman of the parliamentary panel on personal social services.

My hon. Friend said that the training of social workers was not a trivial matter. The Government and I are very much in agreement with that sentiment. In recent weeks we have had several debates about social work, and especially about child care, because of the great concern about child abuse cases. As I emphasised in Monday's debate, we all recognise that the selection and training of social workers is crucial. As my hon. Friend noted, that view is shared by many other observers, including, most recently, by Mr. Louis Blom-Cooper in his study of the Jasmine Beckford case.

Inevitably, I shall go over much of the ground so effectively covered by my hon. Friend, but it is important ground that must be shared between us. Pressures on social workers are great, and will increase. As society changes, the demands upon social workers and the performance that we expect from them become increasingly important. As Mr. Peter Barclay pointed out in his working party review on the role and tasks of social workers, which deserves more attention than it has been given:

"too much is generally expected of social workers. We load upon them unrealistic expectations and we then complain when they do not live up to them."

Hon. Members present today are well aware of that important point.

My hon. Friend discussed at some length, and made some telling and interesting points about, the proposals of the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work. It may be of some benefit to the House if I briefly clarify the relationship between the central council and the other agencies involved. The central council is appointed and funded by the Secretary of State for Social Services, but it is the independent statutory body reponsible for the improvement of training programmes and courses for social work students. The training facilities are provided by universities, polytechnics and colleges. I heard with interest my hon. Friend's point about the response that he has received from universities, and I would be grateful if we could compare notes.

Those universities, polytechnics and colleges are funded by the Department of Education and Science under the normal University Grants Committee and maintained sector arrangements, and student maintenance is provided by local education authorities, Government Departments

and employers. Employers have the prime responsibility for in-service and refresher training. DHSS expenditure on social work and training has increased from £7·8 million in 1982-83 to £9·26 million in 1985-86. I am glad to say that the number of newly qualified social workers increased from 2,717 in 1972 to 4,199 in 1984.

I make the point about the number of agencies involved because I am sure my hon. Friend accepts that, in the changes on the agenda, it will be necessary to consider carefully the input of all the agencies which I listed and the points made by my hon. Friend. I am happy to give him the assurance that he seeks, that before the Government take any firm decisions the House will be given another opportunity to examine the proposals which we believe should be put into practice.

The details of the proposals have already been covered by my hon. Friend, and I was interested to hear his sharp questioning of their thrust. We must take careful account of what he said. The proposals are complex, and, whatever we decide, will take a long time to implement. In our debate on Monday the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) was worried about the time that it might take to implement the new proposals. However, as has been demonstrated in today's debate, much water must be crossed before we can make a sound judgment on the new proposals. Their effect on courses at universities and polytechnics will not be known for some time, since academic planning is not an immediate process.

We must ensure that the fashions of today do not become the out-of-date clichés of yesterday. The training of our social workers, important though it is, must not change month by month, reflecting the whims of fashion as they may change. I hope that my hon. Friend and I are at one on that point. The process must inevitably be taken at a measured tread, but that does not mean that the matter is unimportant.

My hon. Friend's motion refers to the training of residential workers. I offer a small correction to the suggestion in the motion that 70 per cent. of social workers in residential care have no formal social work qualification. Indeed, my hon. Friend mentioned a figure of 80 per cent. Although the figure was provided by a DHSS report, I should put on record the fact that many of the staff in residential homes are cleaners, cooks, handymen or assistants, and there is no reason why they should have the formal qualification which the House is discussing. As for field social workers, where the need for formal qualification is much greater, I am pleased to say that the qualified proportion reaches as much as 80 per cent. It is important that all staff should receive the training that is relevant to the work that they must carry out. It is for the employing authorities to ensure that that is so.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend confirm that he is worried about the number of staff in residential homes who are not qualified to a level at which they can perform their tasks effectively?

Mr. Whitney: Yes, I am happy to confirm that. I also confirm that we have invited the National Institute of Social Work to set up a committee to undertake a comprehensive review of training for residential staff. Lady Wagner has agreed to chair that committee and Mr. Jack Hanson, a former director of social services for Dorset, will be the vice-chairman. I hope my hon. Friend accepts that we are at one on the need to review and improve the position. The committee will review the changing role of residential care and the range of services provided by residential homes.

Although the number of people in residential homes is being reduced, the importance, perhaps paradoxically, of residential homes is increasing. They are left with the particularly difficult cases where great skill is required. The committee will consider the training that is needed by the various kinds of staff who work in the homes so that they can be equipped for the more intensive kind of long and short term residential care that is now required.

In the final minute that remains to me, may I make one further point. Initial training is very important. The issue of, as is known in the trade, generic training versus specialist training——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING BILL

Considered in Committee; reported, without amendment; read the Third time, and passed.

PREVENTION OF OIL POLLUTION BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, That the Bill be now read the Third time. *—[Queen's Consent, signified.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed, without amendments.

HIGHWAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Considered in Committee; reported, without amendment.

Motion made, That the Bill be now read the Third time. *—[Queen's and Prince of Wales' Consent, signified.]*

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Housing (Hyndburn)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

2.33 pm

Mr. Ken Hargreaves (Hyndburn): I thought for some considerable time before I decided to bring the housing problems of Hyndburn before the House once again. I should hate to be responsible for the borough council being thought of as whingeing or complaining. However, because the constituency is and always has been my home I receive daily reminders of the problems that we face. As I hope to live in Hyndburn long after I have ceased to be a Member of Parliament, I should be distressed if failure to deal with those problems were to be a memorial to a lack of effort on my part.

The twin aims of the Government's housing policy are to make Britain the best housed country in Europe and to increase owner-occupation. Both are laudable aims, and, though we are a long way from achieving the first aim, impressive progress has been made. If the Government were to announce before the next general election that they had achieved 80 per cent. owner-occupation, it would be regarded as a major triumph. In Hyndburn we already have that remarkable percentage. The problem for those of us concerned with housing in Hyndburn is to ensure that we maintain it at that level and do not allow it to go into reverse.

I do not need to rehearse before the Minister the statistics of which he is well aware—Hyndburn's 80 per cent. owner-occupation, per capita resources below the national average, despite having the 28th highest per capita general needs index score, and the borough's inability to generate capital receipts. These facts have been set out previously in discussions, debates and documents.

I want to draw the Minister's attention to the increased difficulties which we now face as a result of the reduction in the housing investment programme allocation for 1986-87. In previous housing debates, I have paid tribute to the Government for their interest in and help with the problems which Hyndburn faces. The extra resources, visits and meetings with the Minister did much to reassure the anxious local authority that the problems it faced were understood by the Government. Therefore, it came as a shock when the HIP figures for 1986-87 were announced. Hyndburn's allocation had been reduced from £3·410 million in 1985-86 to £2·572 million for next year. That reduction is serious in itself, but is aggravated by the fact that the Government expect local authorities to make up 42 per cent. of total spending by using capital receipts compared with 25 per cent. in the current year.

Hyndburn's inability to generate capital receipts means that available receipts are unlikely to increase total spending by more than 14 per cent. I regret that arguments which Hyndburn put forward on previous occasions and which had the support of the Department of the Environment at regional level have apparently been ignored at the national level. I accept that there is no possibility of an increase in Hyndburn's HIP allocation for the coming year. I am therefore anxious to explore other ways to ensure that the borough can attract more resources. I also wish to seek assurance for the future.

The authority has never believed in using Government restrictions as an excuse for inaction and it has tried virtually all the new opportunities presented over the last few years. Many have not proved of any great help in an area where market forces reduce the potential for private investment. I believe that the borough council has been progressive and is worthy of encouragement. The council introduced the volume sale of its relatively few council houses prior to the Housing Act 1980. Improvement for sale and homesteading have been used to sell local authority housing for owner-occupation. Both proved useful in specific circumstances but had comparatively little potential. Partnership housing developments were undertaken with significant private investment, but, after almost three years, some of the houses remain unsold. The private sector shows great reluctance to build on redevelopment sites.

The authority believes in a block renovation approach and is now initiating block repair schemes. The need for more responsive estate management has been accepted and a priority estate project is about to start on the largest problem estate and is to be followed by similar projects elsewhere.

The special needs of the elderly have been recognised and the council has taken up with enthusiasm the recommendations made by Dr. Anthea Tinker in "Staying at Home" and has just inaugurated its first warden call scheme in council houses. This will be extended shortly to the private sector. The council has also developed extra care provision in sheltered housing to ensure that the frail elderly are able to remain there rather than have to move into residential homes at a greater cost to public funds.

It remains the authority's policy to encourage housing association activity as an integral part of its housing strategy. The council's initiatives show that it is willing to try anything to help to alleviate the problems and to prevent the even greater difficulties that we foresee arising in the future unless action is taken now. The council has proved that it uses its limited resources effectively and imaginatively. It is worthy of support. Whatever form the support may take this year, it will only limit the damage done as a result of the reduced HIP allocation, but it could, if coupled with some reassurances about the future, do much to reduce anxiety felt by councillors, officials and householders.

The council responded quickly and positively to the announcement of the establishment of the urban housing renewal unit and it has worked closely with its officials and advisers to prepare a package of measures which would improve an estate and bring in private finance to redevelop part of it. A reasonable response to the council's bid for funds would be an immense help to the problem estate involved, a great support for the priority estate project initiative and release much needed funds for use elsewhere in the private sector.

A favourable response to the council's approach for Community refurbishment scheme funding for Huncoat would improve houses and encourage people in the area, which has the highest unemployment in the borough. Although help with urban housing renewal unit schemes and CRS would remove to some extent the immediate financial worries, the council is anxious about possible changes in Housing Corporation funding and the rumoured moves away from the HIP system.

The criteria for Housing Corporation investment have recently been changed to priority areas only — it is priority based on arbitrary criteria which result in authorities with similar GNI scores having scores that vary from 22 to 88. Hyndburn scored 22 which, for 1986-87,

is a cut-off point. We are worried that Government pressure for a higher cut-off point could lead to a loss of Housing Corporation investment in the borough, which would be a most bitter blow. May we be assured that less arbitrary criteria will be used in future and that the council can anticipate Housing Corporation investment?

Rumours of moves away from the HIP system are worrying. The principle of HIP — allocation in accordance with needs—is sound, and the GNI system, while flawed, is a good basis to work on and reasonably comprehensible. Can my hon. Friend assure the council that HIP allocations will continue, that they will be based on a reasonably sophisticated index of needs and that they will include some means of weighting to take account of potential for private funding to replace public funding needs?

My constituents are suffering from poor housing conditions, which are prevalent in many parts of Hyndburn. They know from experience that only a Conservative Government is likely to help them. They are aware that, during the last year of the Labour Government, only £223,000 was spent on improvement grants, whereas we spent £1·8 million last year. The people of the borough were shocked and amazed by the recent episode in the council chamber, which showed the lack of concern of Labour and SDP members. The two parties voted that the director of housing and the chairman of the housing services committee should not be allowed to accept an invitation from my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to meet him to discuss Hyndburn's undoubted housing problems. The decision was made because Labour and SDP councillors were not included in the invitation. Do they really believe that the people who desperately need home improvement grants, for example, are interested in who talks to the Minister as long as he gets the message and Hyndburn gets the money? Fortunately, because of the courage and determination of the chairman of the housing services committee, Councillor Mrs. Elizabeth Court, who, like me, is willing to go anywhere and talk to anyone if it will help in any way to reduce our housing problem, the meeting with the Minister went ahead, as Mrs. Court attended in a personal capacity and not as housing chairman. Although we were denied the contribution which would have been made by the director of housing, Mr. Edgar Bignell, the meeting proved most useful and I hope that, as a result, Hyndburn's case for UHRU and CRS was reinforced.

Because of the reduction in the HIP allocation, it is vital that we find other sources of funding. I accept that the progress towards making this country the best housed in Europe depends largely upon the provision of a sound economic base and the creation of real productive jobs, and not just the making of artificial jobs. I look to the Government to provide a balanced programme for housing, to provide the public finance necessary to pump-prime housing strategy, and to do it in a way that attracts additional private investment. Time is short. Local authorities are increasingly dependent upon capital receipts. The amount of those capital receipts will steadily diminish over the years and the Government must take account of that.

I support the Government's policy of reducing public spending, but their housing policy runs contrary to that aim, as it does not reduce public spending, but simply postpones it. Such a postponement will lead only to the need for far greater spending in the not too distant future. The Government should switch more resources into housing and must ensure that the money is used to greatest effect.

I commend to the Minister the neighbourhood revitalisation service. At present there are four pilot schemes in operation in Sheffield, Oldham, Bedford and Gloucester. Their purpose is to demonstrate that a properly co-ordinated partnership between public and private sectors, with a small amount of public sector investment, can generate a gearing ratio of private sector investment in the housing stock. That concept can be developed to include business investment in the area.

It is too early to say what the gearing ratio should be, but it is expectd to be in the ratio of 1:3 over a period of time. Such schemes are an effective use of scarce resources and additional money allocated to similar schemes would be well spent—not least in Hyndburn, which would be one of the areas to benefit from an expansion of NRS.

I urge the Government to look closely and urgently at the whole question of improvement grants. I hope that they will seriously consider declaring housing stress areas into which additional capital from revenue resources could be invested to concentrate spending on areas with the highest levels of owner-occupied properties that are substandard and in need of repair.

Such concentration of resources would be justified, as it would protect individuals who have invested their limited resources in their own homes. It would be cost-effective and would create much needed jobs because improvement grants are labour-intensive. Given that investment in improvement areas has all those advantages, it is disappointing and hard to understand why the Government have not moved more resolutely in that direction.

Lent is a time for repentance and a time to examine exactly where we stand. It would be a good time for the Government to do just that in relation to their housing policy.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) for once again bringing before the House the housing problems facing his constituents. I well remember the formidable case that he presented in an Adjournment debate on 12 November 1984, following a deputation of councillors and officers to my Department. I was impressed by the careful preparation of the case. I acknowledge the thoroughness and conviction with which my hon. Friend has again brought before the House the problems of his constituency. Today's debate follows a deputation to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction.

I wish to pick up my hon. Friend's point about the Housing Corporation. He is concerned about its prospects for investment in Hyndburn. Each year the corporation submits proposals for its regional distribution for the approval of my hon. Friend. In the past, the basis of that distribution has been the generalised needs index, modified by the corporation to reflect the sort of projects carried out by associations and weighted towards regions with designated inner urban areas within their boundaries. Variations in costs between regions are also taken into account.

[Sir George Young]

Changes in any region's share of the total resources for new projects each year were limited to five per cent. Because of the concern over the shift in resources from the north to the south, regional shares were frozen by the corporation at the 1984-85 level.

The corporation is now reviewing its distribution methodology and its proposals for change are expected later this year. In the meantime, there has been a change in the system and we have asked the corporation further to concentrate resources for new approvals on the areas in which the needs are greatest. To do this, the corporation has used its own housing needs indicator and the Department's measure of multiple deprivation. The corporation has identified 80 areas which would receive priority in the allocation of resources for new projects. Hyndburn has been included in recognition of the difficulties that my hon. Friend has outlined. In total, the allocations for those 80 areas will be maintained in real terms and the corporation will make its allocations on that basis.

I understand that my hon. Friend is as much or even more concerned about what may happen under any new system in the future. When we receive the corporation's proposals for the distribution methodology for future years we will certainly bear in mind the difficulties facing Hyndburn.

At the meeting to which I have referred an invitation was extended to my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to visit Hyndburn. The chairman subsequently wrote to my hon. Friend the Minister repeating the invitation. My hon. Friend the Minister has accepted the invitation, although other pressing commitments mean that he may not be able to honour it for a month or so. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend the Minister welcomes the opportunity to see at first hand some of the problems about which we have heard today. In particular, my hon. Friend the Minister may wish to look at the Huncoat estate to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn has referred and on which I shall have something to say in a moment.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn reminded us of the need for expenditure on the public housing stock. The Government recognise that need, but we hope to harness the energy and resources of the private sector to try to make faster progress than would be achieved if we relied solely on the public sector. In that connection, the urban housing renewal unit was set up to try to engage the interests and resources of the private sector to turn round some of the difficult estates. There has been a good response to that initiative from local authorities of all political persuasions.

Two days ago, a meeting took place between the unit, the Department, regional office representatives and council officers to consider the possibility of making progress on the Huncoat estate just outside Accrington which I understand is one of the more difficult estates that the local authority has to manage. I understand that it was quite a positive meeting. The formal position is that we are now awaiting bids from the local authority both for money held back by the Department to fund the UHRU initiative and for proposals funded under the community refurbishment scheme. As soon as we have those formal bids we shall consider them urgently and I very much hope that we shall be able to make progress.

I understand that the community refurbishment scheme originally put forward by the local authority was within the yardstick normally supported by the Department and that it may be possible to make progress by putting more into the community refurbishment scheme to take some pressure off the more substantial bid on the UHRU budget. It may also be possible to phase the expenditure over two years so that it is more digestible from the Department's point of view.

The initiative taken by the local authority on the Huncoat estate is exactly the kind of initiative that we need throughout the country. If progress can be made on that kind of formula it will be in everyone's interest. I understand that part of the package involves the sale of 26 houses for owner-occupation. That will ensure the co-operation of the private sector. Moreover, the community refurbishment scheme may be able to use people on the estate who are unemployed to work on the refurbishment of the estate and the improvement of the environment. That will not only provide creative work for those people but improve the environment in which they live.

The community refurbishment scheme started on Merseyside as one of our initiatives to improve living conditions for council tenants. It is now being extended to other parts of the country as part of the package under the priority estates project and urban housing renewal. I understand that on the Huncoat estate the council already has some experience of providing opportunities for work under the Manpower Services Commission schemes and that there are plans to extend that. Again, the council's readiness to avail itself of resources from Government is just the kind of initiative that we want.

A bid has been made for extra resources to complement the HIP allocation, to tackle the Huncoat estate. Again, when we get the bid, we shall see what we can do to help. Although Hyndburn was not one of the areas which we initially targeted, we have been impressed by its approach and the difficulties facing the estate.

My hon. Friend spoke about the reduction in the HIP allocations. One has to look at the total picture. The HIP allocations may have been reduced, but the provision for total investment in housing by the public sector was increased by about £200 million during the last public expenditure round. The apparent paradox is accounted for by the fact that local authorities as a whole have more capital receipts that they can draw on to complement their HIP allocations, and also that there has been considerable overspending on the housing side, which the Government have had to take into account in fixing the HIP allocations.

My hon. Friend rightly said that the ability of Hyndburn to generate capital receipts is relatively low compared with other local authorities, because of its relatively small stock. As he may know, we have put forward a new proposal for capital expenditure. I think that the right approach for Hyndburn is to make its response known through its local authority association, and we should be interested to hear what it has to say.

I understand that the council takes the view that with an existing supply of low-priced housing the opportunities for low-cost home ownership ventures are fewer than in other places, but it is considering the sale of several houses, including those at Huncoat, to which I referred. The consultation paper, entitled "Review of the Local Authority Capital Control System in England and Wales", may make some progress as it recognises that the present

system restricts our scope for allocating resources to authorities with the greatest needs because at the moment we cannot take account of the level of capital receipts.

I was interested to see what Hyndburn council has done in its housing department. It has recently brought both its public and private sector services under one umbrella and appointed a new director of housing and environmental health. That improved co-ordination of the council's services should lead to a better use of both staff and financial resources.

One of the issues that concerns my hon. Friend is the revenue constraints on his local authority. There was a change to the housing revenue account factor, known colloquially as E7, which was incorporated in the 1985-86 grant-related expenditure settlement. That change should have gone a considerable way towards meeting the council's concern about that indicator, and I hope that the council welcomes the change. The council has also made representations about the grant-related expenditure assessment for non-housing revenue account housing. Again, that is something that we hope to look into next year.

There are difficulties about allocating resources to local authorities at the moment and taking full account of their housing investment needs. We are now talking to the local authority associations about that. Last month we published a Green Paper entitled "Paying for Local Government", which contained proposals for a new system of capital controls. That was followed earlier this month by the publication of a more detailed consultation paper. One of the options which may help Hyndburn, and on which we have invited comments, would distribute allocations based on a needs element and an element reflecting an authority's performance in generating capital receipts. Again, we are interested in the local authorities' views on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hyndburn rightly drew attention to the marked increase in expenditure on home improvement grants since 1979. The figures that I have for Hyndburn show that for 1979-80 about £264,000 was spent on private sector improvement grants. That figure rose to £1·8 million in 1984-85, and the latest estimate for this year is £1·6 million. Given, as my hon. Friend said, the high percentage of owner-occupiers, many of whom are elderly and have a restricted ability to fund improvements themselves, that sixfold or sevenfold increase in expenditure on improvement grants is a welcome response by central Government to the issues and concerns facing my hon. Friend's constituency.

There are constraints on public expenditure, and my hon. Friend invited the Government to go into repentance as this is the time of the year when such a posture is fashionable. We understand the problems facing housing authorities. The solution is to look at the total picture and to recognise that when dealing with housing, it is legitimate to consider both public and private expenditure. Although public investment in housing may have decreased, the figures for new starts in the private sector in the country as a whole were the highest last year for some 10 years. Private individuals are spending about £9 billion a year on improving their own homes, and that is a higher figure than the total public sector spending on improvement grants.

The picture is rosier if one takes an overall view than if one concentrates simply on the public sector. When my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction visits my hon. Friend's constituency, he will see at first hand many of the issues that we have discussed today. I assure my hon. Friend that we will respond as sympathetically as we can to the case that he has made this afternoon. I am sure that the fruitful relationship between my Department and the council will continue, and that we will ensure that the council continues to receive its fair share of national resources.

Question put and agreed to

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 17 February 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Criminal Trials (Fees)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Attorney-General what negotiations the Lord Chancellor and his officials have conducted with representatives of the Bar concerning fees in criminal cases; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Officials have discussed the report on remuneration of barristers carrying out criminal legal aid, prepared for the Bar by Coopers & Lybrand, with the representatives of the Bar Council. In his letter of 7 February to the chairman of the Bar, the Lord Chancellor said that he remained to be convinced, on the information before him, that the current rates did not represent fair and reasonable remuneration. He made it clear in that letter that he wished to hold further discussions with the Bar about the need to keep fees at a level to attract competent people to the criminal Bar. He accepted that current rates needed to be adjusted for next year, and he was therefore proposing to bring forward regulations based on a routine uprating calculated according to the same formula as in previous years. This would allow for a five per cent. increase overall from 1 April.

Westland plc (Immunity from Prosecution)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General (1) on what date he was asked to give immunity from prosecution in respect of the disclosures of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence; on what date he reached a decision; and with whom he consulted prior to reaching his decision;

(2) what was the information supplied to him, prior to his decision to grant Miss Colette Bowe immunity from prosecution, in connection with the disclosure of official information relating to the Westland affair, which satisfied him that there was in any event no possibility that proceedings would be instituted against her in respect of the part which she had played in the matter; by whom it was supplied; and what was the ultimate source of this information.

The Attorney-General: I have nothing to add to the full account of this matter which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I have already given to the House.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if all EEC countries are implementing log book and loading declaration rules as required by existing common fisheries policy regulations.

Mr. Gummer: All member states other than Spain and Portugal are implementing the requirements of Community regulations on logbooks and landing declarations. Spain and Portugal will, like the other members states were, be given three months to implement the arrangements after the issue of the logbooks in their own languages. We understand that the logbooks are now available and are about to be issued.

Pelagic Fishing

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to complete his review of pelagic fishing.

Mr. Gummer: My right hon. Friends and I hope to complete this review shortly.

Fishing Nets (Mesh Size)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the EEC Commission's proposals for fishing net mesh size increases to 90mm.

Mr. Gummer: The Council regulation on technical conservation measures—Regulation (EEC) No 171/83 as amended—provides for the minimum mesh size in the North sea to be increased from 80 to 90mm with effect from 1 January 1987. The Commission has put forward proposals for the consolidation and revision of Regulation No 171/83 which are currently being discussed within the Community at official level. The proposals include the extension of the 90mm mesh size to the waters to the west of Scotland and the amendment of the special provisions in respect of fishing for sole in the North sea. My right hon. Friends and I are consulting the United Kingdom fishing industry on these proposals and will take its views, along with the objective of conservation of fish stocks, into account in the further Community discussions.

Surplus Foodstuffs

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total tonnage of foodstuffs of all kinds, collectively, in private or public intervention in the European Economic Community; and what was the collective total around the same date in each of the previous 10 years, respectively.

Mr. Jopling: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total sum which has now been provided in the European Economic Community budget for 1986 for the storage, dumping and destruction of food and wine surpluses; and what was the actual amount spent on these activities in each of the past six years, respectively.

Mr. Jopling: The information requested is set out in the table below:

	Storage (mecu)*	*Withdrawals† (mecu)*
1980	383	103
1981	374	121
1982	391	212
1983	799	321
1984	996	461

	Storage* (mecu)	Withdrawals† (mecu)
1985 Budget (after transfers)	1,340	226
1986 Budget	1,471	323

* The cost of storage in public intervention of commodities in structural surplus (cereals, sugar, milk products and beef).

† The cost of withdrawals from the market of fish and fresh fruit and vegetables; in some circumstances withdrawn product finds no end use and has to be destroyed although the expenditure involved is not separately identified in the relevant Community statistics.

Note:

There is no Community dumping of food or wine and therefore no expenditure.

Sources:

EC Commission Financial Reports, 1985 Budget (after transfers), 1986 Budget.

River Mersey (Silt)

Mr. Parry asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he expects to make a decision on the application for a pumping licence for silt dredging from the river Mersey.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1986, c. *261*]: I am now able to announce the decision that I have reached on the renewal of licences for the disposal of dredged spoil and other material in Liverpool bay.

After consideration of all the available information, and in agreement with the licensees concerned, I have decided to renew the licences for the sea disposal of dredged spoil from the Merseyside docks and river channels except in the case of the small amount dredged from the Manchester ship canal which will henceforth go to land. Similarly I have decided to renew the licences of the North West water authority for the sea disposal of sewage sludge, on condition that the trace amount of mercury allowed in the sludge is further reduced by about 30 per cent.

These licences, which will as usual be valid for one year, will be issued under part II of the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 which requires Ministers to have regard to the need to protect the marine environment, its living resources and human health. I am satisfied that the relevant standards for the protection of the marine environment from contamination by mercury are being met. The variations that I have announced in the terms of the licences will, however, contribute to a further reduction of the input of mercury into the areas concerned in accordance with our responsibilities to protect the marine environment.

WALES

NHS (Finance)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total gross expenditure, current and capital, on the National Health Service for each year since 1975; what has been the percentage change deflated by *(a)* real terms, *(b)* the retail price index and *(c)* movements in National Health Service pay and prices.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The total gross expenditure on the NHS in Wales is as follows:

Year	Expenditure (£ million)
1975-76	278·0
1976-77	311·9
1977-78	352·9
1978-79	404·5
1979-80	474·6
1980-81	610·9
1981-82	696·9
1982-83	767·4
1983-84	815·3
1984-85	881·2

The percentage increase during the period 1975-76 to 1984-85 is as follows:—

	Percentage
*(a) in real terms	24·9
†(b) deflated by the Retail Price Index	26·0
‡(c) deflated by NHS pay and prices	18·4

Notes:

* Actual expenditure has been adjusted to take account of the effects of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

† As NHS expenditure deflated by the RPI has been specifically requested, the information has been presented in this way. It is, however, not correct to compare movements in expenditure in NHS with movements in the RPI since the goods and services purchased by the NHS differ considerably from those purchased by the average household. The appropriate measure to reflect movements in NHS expenditure with the economy as a whole is the GDP deflator.

‡ The pay and prices index used is that maintained by DHSS for hospital and community health services expenditure. A separate index for pay and price movements in the NHS in Wales is not available.

Beef Production

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the European Community Commission's latest proposals for beef production as they affect agriculture in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Government welcome the Commission's initiative in taking a fresh look at support measures in the beef sector, but considerable discussion will be required before any final decisions are agreed.

Some of the measures proposed appear at first sight to discriminate against the United Kingdom, but we will make every effort to ensure that the interests of United Kingdom producers are fully taken into account.

Beef Variable Premium Scheme

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek to maintain the beef variable premium scheme for Welsh beef producers.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The importance of the beef variable premium scheme for beef producers and indeed consumers in Wales is fully recognised and this will be taken into account in the common agricultural policy price negotiations. However, it must be recognised that opposition to the scheme will be stronger than usual this year as the Community seeks to achieve a harmonised beef regime.

Agriculture

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a White Paper on the future of agriculture in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to do so.

Capital Expenditure (Holyhead)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the capital expenditure which has been funded through his office from all sources for Holyhead since 1979; and if he will give the figures in constant terms for 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I will write to my hon. Friend in reply to the first part of his question as soon as possible, and place a copy of my letter in the Library. The answer to the second part of his question is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the perinatal mortality rate for each health authority in Wales in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1984, respectively.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. Perinatal mortality rates for 1979 and 1984 have already been published in table 1.07 of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales" Nos. 8 (1981) and 12 (1985) respectively, copies of which are in the Library.

Re-Chem, Pontypool

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will cause a public inquiry to be held into the safety implications of the Re-Chem operation at Pontypool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No. I have made it clear that there is no evidence to warrant a public inquiry. Should relevant evidence emerge, I will, of course, reconsider my decision.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

47. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he has any plans to bring forward proposals to strengthen the powers of Select Committees in relation to the summoning of witnesses who are civil servants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have no such plans.

49. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make a statement on the activities to date of the departmental Select Committees.

Mr. Biffen: I believe that the departmental Select Committees established in 1979 have generally assisted our system of parliamentary scrutiny.

Adjournment Applications

48. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will bring forward proposals to re-arrange the time at which formal applications are made to Mr. Speaker for leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 on days when the first debate is scheduled to be broadcast; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I have no such proposals. It seems doubtful whether my hon. Friend's suggestion would be a practicable proposition, since the broadcasting authorities may broadcast live any part of our proceedings without prior notice being required.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Maxton asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, whether there are any proposals to make staff redundant in any of the Departments of the House.

Mr. Beith: No.

Staff Inspector

Mr. Maxton asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission (1) who will serve on the board which will appoint the new staff inspector in the House; and whether it includes trade union representatives;

(2) who will act as assessor on the applicants for the board which will appoint the new staff inspector in the House.

Mr. Beith: The appointment of the new staff inspector will be made by Mr. Speaker under powers delegated to him by the Commission.

Mr. Maxton asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what will be the terms of employment of the new staff inspector; and to which department of the House he will be appointed.

Mr. Beith: The post of staff inspector will continue to be graded at principal level and is being offered either as an established appointment within the House service, subject to a trial period of one year, or on the basis of a limited term secondment. The staff inspector will be located within the Administration Department and will operate under terms of reference which were laid down for his predecessor in 1982 after extensive consultations between management and trade union sides within the House.

Official Report

Mr. McWilliam asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *396*, regarding the Department of the *Official Report*, from which Department of the House he obtained the information reproduced in the table.

Mr. Beith: In the course of discharging its responsibilities the Commission receives information and advice from all Departments of the House; but it is not the Commission's practice to disclose the source of advice received in any particular case.

PRIME MINISTER

Olga and Alexi Lusnikov

Mr. George Robertson asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to permit the entry to the United Kingdom of Olga and Alexi Lusnikov of the Moscow group for the establishment of trust between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, who are to be expelled from the Soviet Union during the weekend of 15 to 16 February; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: If Mr. and Mrs. Lusnikov wish to come to this country, any application they make will receive careful consideration.

Enterprise Zones

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will indicate Her Majesty's Government's latest estimate of the number of new jobs created in each enterprise zone in the United Kingdom; if there are any plans to designate further such zones; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The increase in the number of jobs in each zone between designation and September 1984 for zones in Great Britain and designation and October 1985 for zones in Northern Ireland is as follows:

	Number
Belfast	*1,753
Clydebank	2,675
Corby	†n/a
Delyn	267
Dudley	129
Glanford and Scunthorpe	‡159
Hartlepool	801
Invergordon	−3
Isle of Dogs	1,859
Londonderry	*181
Middlesbrough	‖−656
Milford Haven	†n/a
North East Lancashire	560
North West Kent	1,548
Rotherham	569
Salford/Trafford	846
Speke	235
Swansea	1,232
Telford	600
Tayside	654
Tyneside	2,137
Wakefield	404
Wellingborough	268
Workington (Allerdale)	203

* Increase in number of jobs from designation to October 1984 is 1,190 for Belfast and 79 for Londonderry.
† The net increase cannot be calculated because figures for the number of jobs at designation are not available. Employment at September 1984 was:
—Corby 4,100
—Milford Haven 1,200
‡ data for Glanford and Scunthorpe amalgamated to preserve the confidentiality of individual establishments.
‖ In order to preserve the confidentiality of individual establishments certain companies are omitted from the September 1984 figures.
Figures at December 1985 for zones in Great Britain are being collected.

Apart from the designation of an enterprise zone at Chatham, announced in principle by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 11 December 1985, there are at present no plans to designate further zones.

Civil Servants

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will advise Her Majesty to set up a royal commission to consider the role and proper responsibilities of civil servants.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Privy Council Office on 28 October at column 663.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make arrangements for civil servants against whom allegations are made in public to defend themselves in public if they so wish.

The Prime Minister: No. I see no reason to change the existing arrangements.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if a copy of the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence was shown to her chief press secretary before officials from the Department of Trade and Industry contacted her office about bringing the letter into the public domain.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the full account which I gave to the House in my statement on 23 January, *Official Report*, columns 449-51, and in the debate on 27 January, *Official Report*, columns 651-58.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister (1) if Her Majesty's Government received any representations from Westland plc after 3 January about the continuing validity of her letter of 1 January to Sir John Cuckney about Government policy on the future of Westland; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what factors determined the timing of the letter sent to Westland plc on 13 January by the permanent under-secretary of state at the Ministry of Defence concerning Government policy on the future of the company.

The Prime Minister: As is clear from the text of Sir Clive Whitmore's letter of 13 January to Sir John Cuckney, a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House on 27 January, that letter was written in response to a letter from Sir John Cuckney of 10 January putting questions about Government policy.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister (1) on what basis the Cabinet Secretary had reason to believe that Miss Colette Bowe would ask him about the position regarding the possible granting of immunity from prosecution;

(2) if she will define the nature of the inquiries by the Cabinet Secretary of other Departments on 10-11 January about the leak of the Solicitor-General's letter;

(3) for what reason the Cabinet Secretary believed that the particular person to whom he went first in his preliminary inquiries had passed information about the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the Press Association;

(4) when precisely the Cabinet Secretary sent the report of his leak inquiry to the Attorney-General;

(5) how the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence was brought to the attention of the Department of Trade and Industry's press secretary; and how soon this was done after it was received by the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's private office;

(6) what evidence was sought or obtained by the Cabinet Secretary as to whether she had made any inquiries about who had leaked the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence, prior to the inquiry being authorised;

(7) what specific evidence was available to the Cabinet Secretary which led him to believe that officials did not understand what they were being asked to do in relation to giving information on the Solicitor-General's letter of 6 January to the Press Association.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the full account which I gave to the House in my statement on 23

January—[*Official Report*, columns 449-451]—and in the debate on 27 January—[*Official Report*, columns 651-658].

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what factors Her Majesty's Government take into account in deciding the timing of the release of information of commercial sensitivity, having regard to relevant market factors; and how these factors were applied in relation to the disclosure of parts of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence relating to Westland.

The Prime Minister: No general answer can be given to the first part of the question: any steps to be taken by the Government must depend on the specific circumstances involved.

As to the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I have nothing to add to my statement on 23 January and my speech on 27 January.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of 11 February, what action was taken in connection with the report by the then Secretary of State for Defence alleging that the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry had urged the managing director of the leading company in the European Westland Consortium to withdraw in the national interest," during the period between the receipt by the private office of that report on 8 January and the discussion of Westland plc by the Cabinet on 9 January.

The Prime Minister [*pursuant to her reply*, 14 February 1986, c. 561]: I regret that the hon. Member was given an inappropriate answer to this question on Friday. The answer should have been as follows: I have nothing to add to my answer of 11 February—[*Official Report*, c. *414*].

Civil Service

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister by what authority disciplinary powers in Civil Service departments are exercised by the permanent head of the department.

The Prime Minister: Disciplinary procedures for the Civil Service are set out in Estacode Section Kb. A copy of this document is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what ministerial oversight there is of the exercise by the permanent heads of Civil Service Departments of their disciplinary powers; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on 5 February — [*Official Report*, column 160.].

Select Committees (Witnesses)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what is her general policy towards the circumstances in which officials whose conduct has been the subject of an internal inquiry should be authorised to appear as witnesses before a Select Committee's inquiry into related matters; to what extent the practical application of this policy would be influenced in any given case by *(a)* the rank or position of the official in question, *(b)* whether or not disciplinary action had been taken and *(c)* the fact the immunity from prosecution had been granted; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Officials giving evidence before Select Committees do so on behalf of their Ministers, and it is therefore customary for Ministers to decide which officials should represent them for this purpose. The principles are set out in "Memorandum of Guidance for Officials appearing before Select Committees", issued as General Notice GEN 80/38, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Nationalised Industries (Chairmen's Salaries)

Mr. Hancock asked the Prime Minister what were the salaries of the chairmen of state-owned industries on 1 January 1979 and in 1986; and what is the percentage difference in real terms.

The Prime Minister: The following table shows the salary of the chairman of each of the present nationalised industries at 1 January 1979 and 1 January 1986 together with the percentage difference in excess of the increase in the retail prices index during that period.

Nationalised Industry Chairmen

	Col A *Salary at 1 January 1979* £	*Col B* *Salary at 1 January 1986†* £	*Col C* *Change in excess of increase in retail prices index* per cent.*
National Coal Board	25,890	59,325	23·5
British Steel Corporation	31,390	60,000 (2½ days a week)	106·0
British Shipbuilders	25,890	94,600	97·0
British Airways	10,356 (2 days a week)	50,000 (3 days a week)	73·5
Post Office	25,890	69,000	43·7
British Rail	25,895	72,000	49·9
British Gas Cporporation	25,890	71,820	49·5
Electricity Council	25,890	71,820	49·5
Central Electricity Generating Board	23,690	71,820	63·4
Area Electricity Boards	14,340-18,500	35,700-43,670	34·2-27·3
British Airports Authority	19,840	57,240	55·5
British National Oil Corporation	31,415	24,000 (2 days a week)	3·0
London Regional transport	not a nationalised industry	55,000	

	Col A Salary at 1 January 1979 £	Col B Salary at 1 January 1986† £	Col C Change in excess of increase in retail prices index* per cent.
National Bus Company	8,820 (2 days a week)	50,000	22·2
Scottish Transport Group	9,372.50p (2½ days a week)	22,500 (2½ days a week)	29·4
Civil Aviation Authority	16,896 (4 days a week)	41,580 (4 days a week)	32·7
South of Scotland Electricity Board	18,740	49,500	42·4
North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board	9,370 (2½ days a week)	22,000 (2½ days a week)	26·6
Regional Water Authorities	not a nationalised industry	18,295-35,480 (2½ to 4 days a week)	
British Waterways Board	7,445 (2½ days a week)	16,038 (2½ days a week)	16·1

Notes

* Where time input has channged the percentage figure has been adjusted accordingly.

† In addition to the basic salaries shown above for 1986 the Chairmen of the British Steel Corporation, British Shipbuilders, the Post Office and the British Airports Authority are eligible for performance bonuses.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tobacco Industry

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total of grants in aid paid to the tobacco industry in Northern Ireland since 1980.

Dr. Boyson [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c. 523]: A total of £21,522,047 has been paid towards the maintenance and development of the tobacco industry in Northern Ireland. The industry currently employs 4,166 people in a region of particularly high unemployment.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Insurance)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to oblige local education authorities to pay the full cost of schools insuring against theft, fire or damage to items of school equipment purchased by voluntary funds and donated to the school.

Mr. Dunn: No. Insurance of school buildings and contents is for local education authorities.

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the current cost per pupil of education at primary and secondary level in the Inner London education authority; what information he has as to the equivalent figures for each of the London boroughs; if he will give such similar information as is available for each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Information is readily available for the last six years as follows:

Net Institutional Expenditure per Primary Pupil (£ Cash)

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Barking	415	495	625	690	755	815
Barnet	410	475	610	705	780	830
Bexley	355	420	535	615	675	710
Brent	480	590	775	840	910	980
Bromley	380	435	560	650	710	760
Croydon	385	450	580	660	700	750
Ealing	460	555	705	825	915	975
Enfield	350	425	560	605	660	705
Haringey	475	605	785	865	970	1,095
Harrow	390	465	620	665	725	760
Havering	360	435	565	625	695	740
Hillingdon	395	465	600	675	750	825
Hounslow	410	500	650	740	835	900
Kingston-upon-Thames	400	450	565	640	680	730
Merton	420	520	650	695	770	780
Newham	470	570	730	810	885	950
Redbridge	385	440	565	635	695	745
Richmond-upon-Thames	415	485	625	705	745	800
Sutton	375	410	515	585	640	680
Waltham Forest	420	490	535	730	835	875

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Average Outer London	410	485	625	700	770	825
ILEA	580	710	915	1,035	1,125	1,215

Net Institutional Expenditure per Secondary Pupil (£ Cash)

	1978-79	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84
Barking	615	715	910	970	1,025	1,090
Barnet	610	690	875	995	1,100	1,190
Bexley	550	630	775	890	970	1,030
Brent	780	785	1,025	1,120	1,210	1,365
Bromley	580	665	840	945	1,020	1,095
Croydon	575	670	840	960	1,065	1,145
Ealing	630	720	910	1,035	1,125	1,220
Enfield	525	605	790	875	965	1,055
Haringey	625	760	975	1,100	1,270	1,475
Harrow	650	745	995	1,075	1,155	1,200
Havering	575	675	865	975	1,070	1,135
Hillingdon	595	670	850	965	1,065	1,190
Hounslow	580	685	880	995	1,055	1,150
Kingston-upon-Thames	600	635	790	890	965	1,055
Merton	555	660	800	855	935	970
Newham	645	740	950	1,070	1,195	1,340
Redbridge	670	680	860	980	1,060	1,125
Richmond-upon-Thames	550	635	820	950	1,005	1,040
Sutton	600	605	750	850	940	1,000
Waltham Forest	725	785	995	1,140	1,240	1,305
Average Outer London	615	690	875	980	1,075	1,160
ILEA	840	945	1,235	1,415	1,565	1,760

Student Places (Financial Allocation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much he has allocated for the next academic year to polytechnics and colleges of higher education to avoid a predicted shortfall in student places.

Mr. Walden: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in his reply of 12 November 1985, at column *107*, to my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley), the AFE quantum for the financial year 1986-87, which covers the first two terms of the 1986-87 academic year, has been determined at £661 million, an increase of 6 per cent. on 1985-86. Advice from the National Advisory Body for public sector higher education (NAB) on the allocation of the 1986-87 quantum, which, as my right hon. Friend indicated in his reply of 20 December 1985, at columns *338-40* to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), has been accepted, was based on the proposition that student demand and therefore the number of places to be provided would remain roughly stable between 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Secondary Education

Miss Fookes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his decision regarding the scheme to reorganise secondary education in part of Plymouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science why he has not yet made known his decision concerning the proposals for the reorganisation of secondary education in Plymouth which were first submitted for his approval in March 1984, and amended 11 months ago; and when he proposes to announce his decision.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is still considering these proposals and hopes to be able to announce his decision on them very shortly.

Research Grants

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the joint Research Council —Ministry of Defence research grants will provide an unmarked contribution towards overhead costs for the institutions concerned.

Mr. Walden: No contribution towards overhead costs will be provided as part of research grants awarded under this scheme. This is in accordance with the arrangements which normally apply to all research grants made under the dual support system to academic institutions by the research councils and which have been in force for many years.

GCSE Examinations

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local education authorities have now requested a postponement of the introduction of GCSE examinations.

Mr. Chris Patten: Six local education authorities have requested postponement of the introduction of the GCSE: Cambridgeshire; Derbyshire; Hertfordshire; Leicestershire; Norfolk and Northamptonshire. On 6 February my right hon. Friend confirmed that the introduction of the GCSE will proceed in accord with the timetable set and that he has no intention of postponing it.

Students (Grants)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, under the new community

charge proposals, students will have their community charge contributions deducted at source from their grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 4 February 1986 at column *111*, to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden.)

SCOTLAND

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each of the past five years, the amount of money that the Scottish Development Agency has spent on tourism projects.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Development Agency's records do not separately identify expenditure on projects to assist tourism.

Electricity Generation

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of electricity was produced by nuclear power in *(a)* 1984 and *(b)* 1985 in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish electricity boards estimate that the percentage of their total generated output produced from nuclear stations was 35·6 per cent. in 1984 and 40·6 per cent. in 1985.

Coatbridge Project

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, in the light of the proposed closure of Gartcosh steel strip mill, he has invited the Scottish Development Agency to extend and enhance the Coatbridge project; and what other proposals he has for job creation in the area.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Government regret the loss of jobs which will result from the closure of the Gartcosh mill. A number of job-creating initiatives are already underway, including the Coatbridge project, the Motherwell project, and local enterprise trusts. The Scottish Development Agency is at present reviewing the future organisation of its activities in the Coatbridge area, since the initial term of the Coatbridge project is due to expire this year. I have indicated to the agency that I expect the future organisation and intensity of agency activities in the area to take account of the effect of the closure of Gartcosh.

Accident Statistics

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of drivers involved in accidents in Scotland with positive breath tests or failure to provide a specimen from 1976 to 1984, inclusive, and the total number of drivers involved in accidents with positive breath tests or failure to provide a specimen during the following periods—04.00 hours to 10.00 hours, 10.00 hours to 16.00 hours, 16.00 hours to 22.00 hours and 22.00 hours to 04.00 hours from 1976 to 1984, inclusive, or such periods for which statistics are available.

Mr. Ancram: The figures requested are as follows. Information on failure by drivers involved in accidents to provide a blood or urine specimen is not held centrally.

Drivers with positive breath tests, or failing to provide a breath test, involved in accidents:

Year	*Time of day*				*Total*
	4 am to 10 am	*10 am to 4 pm*	*4 pm to 10 pm*	*10 pm to 4 am*	
1976	*	*	*	*	1,335
1977	*	*	*	*	1,378
1978	*	*	*	*	1,484
1979	45	158	552	835	1,590
1980	42	145	555	728	1,470
1981	44	127	513	679	1,363
1982	47	119	562	714	1,442
1983	27	103	435	597	1,162
1984	44	87	447	623	1,201

* Not available.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for Scotland the actual or projected payments of regional development grants in each year from 1979-80 to 1988-89 *(a)* at current prices and *(b)* at 1985 prices.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Actual or projected payments of regional development grants in each year from 1979-80 to 1986-87 are set out in the table below. These are shown net of refunds. No firm plans have been made about separate provision for regional development grants in 1987-88 and 1988-89 but public expenditure plans include provision of £100 million and £110 million respectively, at current prices and rounded to the nearest £10 million, for aggregate regional and general industrial support in these years.

£ million

Financial Year	*At current prices*	*At 1984-85 prices*
1979-80	*67	*103
1980-81	110	141
1981-82	138	161
1982-83	282	307
1983-84	136	142
1984-85	105	105
1985-86	109	104
1986-87	126	115

* Estimate.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate for the years until 1988-89 the net expenditure on regional selective assistance in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: An estimate of net expenditure on regional selective assistance in Scotland for the current year and information about provision for 1986-87, and about aggregate provision for regional and general industrial support for 1987-88 and 1988-89, are contained in "Public Expenditure to 1988-89: A Commentary on the Scotland Programme" published by the Scottish Office and made available to all Scottish hon. Members. No firm plans are made about separate provision for selective assistance in 1987-88 and 1988-89.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing his latest estimate of expenditure on regional assistance in Scotland for 1985-86; and if he will compare this with his original estimate for such expenditure.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The latest estimate of expenditure on regional assistance in Scotland for 1985-86 compared with the original estimate is set out in the table:

	Original estimate £ million	*Latest published estimate (winter supplementary)* £ million
Regional selective assistance	39	53
"Old" regional development grants	95	101
"New" regional development grants	13	13
Total gross	147	167
Receipts	8	5
TOTAL NET	*139	*162

* Includes £2 million not classified as public expenditure.

A more detailed breakdown of these estimates is contained in "Supply Estimates 1985-86, Class XV Scotland" and "Supply Estimates 1985-86, Supplementary Estimates".

Tain-Golspie Line

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on finance provided by *(a)* the European Economic Community regional fund and *(b)* the Highlands and Islands Development Board to the proposed new British Rail line between Tain and Golspie over the planned Dornoch Firth bridge; if Her Majesty's Government will provide finance for British Rail to build this line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Ancram: British Rail have had technical discussions with Scottish Development Department on the feasibility of a rail link across the Dornoch firth. They have however made no firm proposal for construction.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in arriving at the proposed level of grant-in-aid provision for the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1986-87, an allowance was made for profits which the board was anticipating to receive from the realisation of any shareholdings.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Education in Scotland on 7 February.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will express the proposed level of grant-in-aid provision for the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1986-87 in terms of percentage change in real terms compared with the total for 1985-86; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The change in real terms is −13 per cent. The reduction is due mainly to the impending completion of the integrated development programme for the Western Isles.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his proposed level of grant-in-aid provision for the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1986-87 is subject to ongoing review and adjustment in the light of *(a)* unanticipated levels of profit accruing to the board through the realisation of share-holdings, *(b)* unanticipated levels of applications for such assistance and *(c)* evidence that all projects deemed to be viable in the opinion of the board are unlikely to progress due to insufficient grant-in-aid provision.

Mr. John MacKay: Grant-in-aid for the Highlands and Islands Development Board is contained within a cash-limited vote. The board has to control is expenditure to keep within the gross expenditure limit set and must, therefore, continuously assess its priorities and manage its programmes of assistance accordingly. The board's expenditure, commitments and income are monitored continuously throughout the year by the Industry Department for Scotland. Adjustments (both upward and downward) have been made in the past but any adjustment must have regard to the wider public expenditure implications.

Rents

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give figures for the average annual rent determined by rent officers for houses in Scotland in each of the last five years, showing figures for housing association rents and private sector rents separately and the numbers of houses covered by the determinations.

Mr. Rifkind: The information requested is published in "Scottish Housing Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Hazardous Installations (Wales)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report*, for each parliamentary constituency in Wales, the numbers of hazardous installations currently in operation.

Mr. Trippier: The information is not available in the form requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Brightside Lane Warehouse Fire

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General whether the principal inspector of factories who visited the Brightside lane warehouse fire on the morning of 15 December gave any advice to the fire brigade on the wearing of breathing apparatus.

Mr. Trippier: No. It is not customary for Health and Safety Executive inspectors to intervene during fire fighting operations.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what were the dates between which the Employment Medical Advisory Service medical examination of the firemen at the Brightside lane warehouse fire took place.

Mr. Trippier: Between 20 February and 2 April 1985.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what were the dates on which the Health and Safety Executive inspectors took statements from firemen at the Brightside lane warehouse fire.

Mr. Trippier: Inspectors took statements from firemen between 26 April 1985 and 2 July 1985.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what was the date on which the fire service debriefing report referred to in paragraph 97 of the Health and Safety Executive report on the Brightside lane warehouse fire was completed.

Mr. Trippier: This is a matter for the South Yorkshire fire service.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General for how many months the faulty cable referred to in paragraphs 100 and 101 of the Health and Safety Executive report on the Brightside lane warehouse fire had been in use.

Mr. Trippier: Evidence suggests that it had been in use since about October 1983.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General whether the Health and Safety Executive has initiated a prosecution against Pickfords in relation to the matters described in paragraphs 100, 101, 102, 103 and 204 of the report on the Brightside lane warehouse fire.

Mr. Trippier: There are to be no prosecutions in relation to the fire.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General why the Health and Safety Executive report on the Brightside lane warehouse fire makes no distinction between permanent and retained firefighters.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act requires the same standards to be applied to both permanent and retained firefighters.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General whether a log exists detailing the day-by-day progress of the Health and Safety Executive inspectors' investigations of the Brightside lane warehouse fire.

Mr. Trippier: No.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General on what dates during 1980 Health and Safety Executive inspectors visited the site of the Brightside lane warehouse fire.

Mr. Trippier: The site was visited on 7 May 1980.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General, following the 1980 visit to the site of the Brightside lane warehouse fire, how many years the Health and Safety Executive decided should elapse before a further planned visit was made to the site.

Mr. Trippier: No period was set.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General why the Health and Safety Executive inspector who visited unit 6 at the Brightside lane warehouse fire in August and November 1983 did not on either occasion visit unit 1 at the site.

Mr. Trippier: The visits to unit 6 were made following the notification of occupation by British Services Ltd. The visits were not directed at the site as a whole.

Regional Directors (Functions)

Mr. Gale asked the Paymaster General if he will list the current functions of the regional directors, Department of Employment.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Under an agency agreement made between the Secretary of State for Employment and the Manpower Services Commission the Commission's Training Division regional directors act as the Secretary of State for Employment's representatives in their regions. They carry out a range of functions on his behalf, including: the management of the new regional enterprise units recently set up within the Department; collating and providing information on manpower matters and advice relating to such matters; collecting and collating unemployment and vacancy statistics, and providing unemployment benefit offices with information regarding industrial disputes; issuing monthly regional press notices relating to unemployment and vacancy statistics; and handling enquiries from the press relating to their issue.

Regional Enterprise Units

Mr. Gale asked the Paymaster General if he will list the functions of the regional enterprise units.

Mr. Trippier: The main duties of the regional enterprise units can be summarised under the following broad headings: promotion of enterprise—they will act as the regional link for the enterprise and deregulation unit in spreading the message about deregulation, identifying burdens and providing a regional input to other EDU initiatives; representing and promoting the interest of small firms and developing links with small firms and small firms organisations; sponorship and funding of local enterprise agencies, including administration of the local enterprise agency grant scheme; developing links with tourist bodies and identifying obstacles to the growth of tourism at regional level.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dalyell asked the Paymaster General how many people not included in the published unemployment figures were in part-time employment at the latest date for which figures are available; and how many were engaged on YTS or community programmes.

Mr. Lang: The latest available estimate of the number of people aged 16 or over in Great Britain in part-time paid employment not claiming unemployment benefits is 4·8 million, based on the labour force survey conducted in spring 1984. The latest available estimates of the total numbers of people in Great Britain covered by the YTS and the community programme are 329,000 and 174,000 respectively relating to the end of December 1985.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Paymaster General how many people under 65 years of age were unemployed but not registered as claiming benefit at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: According to results of the labour force survey, in the spring of 1984 in Great Britain there were about 850,000 people without jobs seeking work aged under 65 who were not included in the monthly count of benefit claimants. There were 940,000 registered for benefit but not looking for work.

Mr. Hoyle asked the Paymaster General if he will state the latest unemployment figures by ward and postal area for Peterborough, Northampton borough, Swindon, St. Helens, Wigan, Poulton, Bolton and Bury.

Mr. Lang: I am sending a copy of a computer printout giving the requested ward information, which is also available from the Library. The printout shows numbers of unemployed claimants as at 9 January 1986 by wards in the local authority districts of Peterborough,

Northampton, St. Helens, Wigan, Bolton, Bury, Thamesdown—which covers the area of Swindon—and the wards that cover the area of Poulton. Unemployment figures by postal area for this date are not available.

News International (Wapping Premises)

Mr. Gould asked the Paymaster General if the premises being used by News International at Wapping have been inspected by inspectors of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. Health and Safety Executive inspectors have visited the News International premises on several occasions during the installation and commissioning of plant.

Community Programme

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of people in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight who are eligible for a place on the community programme.

Mr. Lang: Available figures are as follows:

	Hampshire and Isle of Wight
18-24 years unemployed for 6 months or more	9,146
25 years and over unemployed for 12 months or more	16,983
	26,129

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Accountant in Bankruptcy

Mr. George Robertson asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland, if he has yet determined the criteria which will be used to allocate cases in the hands of the Accountant in Bankruptcy under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I assume that the question relates to the list to be maintained by the Accountant in Bankruptcy under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 of persons who can be appointed by a sheriff to act as an interim trustee in a sequestration. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has prescribed the qualifications of persons who are eligible to go on that list, but he has no power to prescribe the criteria by reference to which a sheriff may appoint a person from that list to act as an interim trustee in any particular sequestration.

CIVIL SERVICE

Civil Servants (Initiative Rewards)

Mr. Soames asked the Minister for the Civil Service what steps he is taking to reward initiative on the part of civil servants; and what penalties he will introduce in the event of errors.

Mr. Luce: The Government's programme for improved management efficiency is directed at the encouragement of good performance by civil servants at all levels. Important elements in his programme include arrangements for the better management and control of resources, the setting of clearer objectives for staff, the development of more effective staff reporting and appraisal procedures and the experimental performance bonus scheme which is designed to encourage and reward particularly good performance. Steps have also been taken to deal more effectively with poor performance. Questions of penalties for mistakes or misdeeds by individual civil servants are dealt with as part of the procedures for reporting and appraisal or under the disciplinary procedures set out in Estacode section Kb, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, as appropriate.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has to the effects of the Ethiopian Government's resettlement policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I understand that some 600,000 people have so far been moved from the northern provinces in the current phase of the Ethiopian Government's resettlement programme. There have been regular reports of coercion and families being split up, and of inadequate preparation of the resettlement areas. We have on several occasions expressed our concern. I reiterated these concerns to Mr. Michael Priestly, United Nations co-ordinator in Addis Ababa, when he called on me on 7 February.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the amount of grain that has arrived in Ethiopia from each member state of the European Economic Community and the United States in each of the last six months; what promised deliveries are still outstanding from these states; when they are likely to arrive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: Information on deliveries made and planned is contained on pages 39-53 of the lastest status report No. 18 dated 2 January 1986 from the World Food Programme's Africa task force secretariat. I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

I discussed emergency food aid for Ethiopia on 4 February with the UN Assistant Secretary-General based in Addis Ababa, Mr. Priestley. According to his figures pledges currently made only cover some 80 per cent. of the estimated need for 1986. I have therefore asked the Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr. Natali, to propose a further substantial allocation to Ethiopia from the 1986 EC food aid programme in addition to the 150,000 tonnes that were agreed by the food aid management committee on 29 January.

The United Kingdom will be delivering 17,700 tonnes from its national programme to Ethiopia in March-April 1986 through the World Food Programme. Following my discussion with Mr. Priestley I have decided we should provide a further 13,700 tonnes bilaterally during 1986.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated total cereal requirement for famine relief in Ethiopia for 1986; what deliveries have so far been made; and what has been promised.

Mr. Raison: The United Nations co-ordinator in Addis Ababa estimates that Ethiopia will need 1·2 million tonnes

of food aid in the form of cereals in 1986. Three hundred thousand tonnes will be available from deliveries in 1985. Our best estimate is that a further 670,000 tonnes has been firmly pledged for 1986 or is in prospect. The World Food Programme reported on 11 February that 67,000 tonnes of these new pledges had been delivered to Ethiopia.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been received by his Department within the last six months regarding levels of United Kingdom aid in Ethiopia and the Sudan.

Mr. Raison: The Overseas Development Administration has received many hundreds of representations within the last six months regarding levels of United Kingdom aid in Ethiopia and the Sudan.

These include parliamentary questions, letters from hon. Members and members of the public, and petitions.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the estimated supplementary food needs for famine relief in Ethiopia in 1986, the amounts so far delivered, and all outstanding pledges, together with edible oil pledges and deliveries.

Mr. Raison: After allowing for some 31,000 tonnes carried over in stocks from 1985, net additional supplementary food needs (skimmed milk powder and high protein biscuits) for 1986 are estimated to be about 91,000 tonnes; 19,000 tonnes have so far been pledged and 1,300 tonnes delivered.

Net additional edible oil needs for 1986 are estimated to be about 43,000 tonnes; 16,800 tonnes have been pledged and 7,000 tonnes delivered.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the amounts of long-term development aid supplied by the United Kingdom to Ethiopia for the last five years, together with projected aid for the next two years, at outturn and at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Raison: The following table shows British long term development aid to Ethiopia, excluding disaster relief and food aid but including technical co-operation and training, in £'000.

	*Current prices**	*1984-85 prices†*
1980	832	1,109
1981	541	644
1982	451	500
1983	428	452
1984	572	579

* *Source:* British Aid Statistics 1980-84, tables 18, 22 and 23.
† Using GDP deflator.

Figures for 1985 are not yet available. In the next two years we shall be building up our modest programme of technical co-operation.

A substantial amount of aid goes to Ethiopia through multilateral agencies and the United Kingdom's share of this in 1984 was about £13·5 million; no split between long term development aid and short-term relief is available. In addition much of the food aid supplied by Britain has supported development through food-for-work schemes.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has regarding the present level of grain stock at Assab and at Massawa in Ethiopia and in Djibouti; and how these levels compare with stocks in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Raison: Information from the World Food Programme Africa task force secretariat is that the pesent stock levels are:

	Tonnes
Assab	80,600
Massawa	50,400
Djibouti	16,100

Stocks in each of the last 12 months were as follows:

Level of grain stocks (thousand tonnes)

	Assab	*Massawa*	*Djibouti*
End of February 1985	50·0	No accurate data available	No accurate data available
End of March	84·0	29·9	15·0
End of April	87·4	33·3	20·8
End of May	76·0	58·0	44·0
End of June	71·6	54·8	46·2
End of July 1985	77·8	20·5	32·2
End August	79·6	33·5	21·2
End September	85·0	29·4	17·4
End October	98·6	40·6	3·7
End November	73·8	36·8	2·6
End December 1985	56·5	27·9	18·4
End January 1986	78·8	28·7	18·3

These figures do not include any grain in ships lying offshore.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the amount of grain that will arrive in the port of Assab in Ethiopia in each of the next eight weeks and as to how much will be in store at the port in each of those weeks.

Mr. Raison: Information received from the World Food Programme Africa task force secretariat on 11 February indicates that there were on the quay in Assab, 80,600 tonnes of grain and offshore 24,600 tonnes of grain. A further 107,000 tonnes are expected in February-March 1986.

As I explained to the hon. Member on 23 July 1985 at columns *501-2* shipping arrangements are made by donors in close consultation with the World Food Programme on a monthly basis. The amount in store at port will depend on the level of offtake from the port; this was 11,200 tonnes in the week to 11 February, although the recent average weekly offtake has been rather higher.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* his estimate of the number of people likely to need assistance during 1986 in Ethiopia and their specific requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: The United Nations co-ordinator in Addis Ababa estimates that 6·22 million people, excluding those in resettlement areas, will require extraordinary food aid and other support in 1986.

I have given details of food requirements in earlier answers. The UN co-ordinator estimates that non-food aid requirements total $218 million, including $91 million for agriculture, $62 million, for transport, $17 million for health, $26 million for water supply and $22 million for blankets, medical supplies and so on.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Merchant asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the Commonwealth Development Corporation has been authorised to extend its area of operations.

Mr. Raison: I have decided to give approval to CDC undertaking activities in Pakistan. This is subject to consultation between CDC and my Department on the scale and content of CDC's intended investment programme in that country.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Vietnamese Refugees

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Vietnamese refugees in closed camps in Hong Kong claim to have spouses in open camps; what discussions he has had about the possibility of them being able to join one another; what action is proposed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: Sixty Vietnamese refugees in open camps have claimed to have spouses in closed camps. Of these, 47 have joined their spouses in closed camps, five cases are pending and five have withdrawn their request to join their spouses. In the other three cases the couples left Hong Kong together for resettlement before reunion could take place.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to which other countries have decided to accept more Vietnamese refugees from Hong Kong, indicating (i) the name of the country and (ii) the number of new Vietnamese refugees accepted.

Mr. Renton: Following our decision to accept about 500 additional refugees from Hong Kong, we have approached over 20 countries in an effort to increase resettlement from the Hong Kong camps. We have been advised that, in addition to their previously-announced quotas, Australia will accept 200 more refugees, and Canada 50; and also that New Zealand will take 10 refugees from Hong Kong. Most other countries are still considering their responses and we remain in close touch with them.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current number of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong (i) in closed camps and (ii) in open camps.

Mr. Renton: On 14 February 4,809 refugees were in closed camps and 4,380 in open camps.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Hong Kong Government about Vietnamese refugees in closed camps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We and the Hong Kong Government remain in close touch on the Vietnamese refugees problem in Hong Kong. The need for the closed camp policy is kept under constant review. Neither we nor the Hong Kong Government wish to retain the closed camps for refugees any longer than is necessary.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Indonesia about Vietnamese refugees in that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None, but we keep in close touch with Indonesia and other members of the Association of South East Asian Nations on the problems of Indo-China generally. We are deeply concerned about the question of Vietnamese refugees in south-east Asia and attach particular priority to resettling those in camps in Hong Kong.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about statements made by the Chinese Government about the status of Vietnamese refugees in Hong Kong after 1997; and how many such refugees are expected still to be in camps at that date.

Mr. Renton: I have no information about any such statement by the Government of the People's Republic of China. China has provided permanent asylum for some 265,000 refugees from Vietnam. This is an admirable record. It is our strong hope that no refugees will remain in Hong Kong in 1997.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contingency arrangements have been made with the Hong Kong Government in respect of Vietnamese still in refugee camps at the time of transfer of sovereignty in 1997; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: None. It is our firm intention that the Vietnamese refugee problem in Hong Kong should be resolved well before 1997. In any event, the joint declaration on the future of Hong Kong provides for the continuation after 30 June 1997 of Hong Kong's present social and legal systems and so any refugees then in Hong Kong should retain their current status.

Human Rights (Poland)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made since 1 January 1985 to the Polish authorities concerning the imprisonment of political dissenters and other abuses of human rights in Poland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: During his visit to Warsaw in April 1985, my right hon. and learned Friend stressed our concern that progress towards internal reconciliation in Poland should be maintained, and spoke very frankly to his hosts of our deep anxiety about moves in a contrary direction, giving examples. On 16 May my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind), the then Minister of State, repeated out concerns to the Polish ambassador. On 19 June my right hon. and learned Friend asked the Polish ambassador to call and said that the prison sentences imposed on Mr. Lis, Mr. Michnik and Mr. Frasyniuk had caused dismay in Britain. He also mentioned other indications of increasing repression. He spoke similarly to the Polish Foreign Minister when they met at Helsinki on 30 July. On 14 November my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Pentlands repeated our concerns to the Polish Deputy Foreign Minister when the latter visited London.

On 4 December my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Pentlands asked the Polish ambassador to call and expressed our concern at measures designed to restrict academic freedom in Poland. On 3 February I expressed concern to the Polish ambassador about developments, in particular the decision to put Lech Walesa on trial. On 6 February I repeated our concerns to the group of Polish parliamentarians visiting London under IPU auspices.

Russian Jews (Emigration)

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are his estimates of the numbers of Russian Jews who have been allowed to emigrate in each of the last six months.

Mr. Renton: The figures available to us for the last six months are as follows:

	Number
1985	
August	29
September	93
October	124
November	128
December	92
1986	
January	79

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has made in recent times to raise the problem of those Jews in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics who have applied to emigrate and been refused under the terms of the Helsinki agreement on human rights; with what effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The question of Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union was raised by my right hon. and learned Friend, then Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) during his meeting with Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kornienko in Moscow last July. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs raised the Soviet Union's failure to live up to its CSCE commitments with Mr. Shevardnadze on 1 August 1985. My noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lady Young, made similar representations to Deputy Foreign Minister Ryzhov on 21 January. We shall continue to take suitable opportunities to press the Soviet Union on these important matters.

Philippines

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of the Philippines about the implications for United Kingdom-Philippine relations about the conduct of the recent election there.

Mr. Renton: None. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 10 February, at column *332*.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency Demonstration Scheme

12. **Mrs. Ann Winterton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the energy efficiency demonstration scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: I am delighted that the energy efficiency demonstration scheme has now achieved its target of stimulating annual energy savings worth £120 million by the beginning of this year. The energy saving technologies pioneered through the scheme have been taken up in over 5,600 different locations throughout the United Kingdom. This is a marvellous start for the Monergy campaign.

Oil Prices

14. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on his Department's latest estimate of the future trend of North sea oil prices.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: North sea oil prices are determined by the world market and ultimately by the balance of supply and demand.

20. **Mr. Orme** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implications for energy policy of the recent fall in crude oil prices.

Mr. Peter Walker: It is too early to say what if any lasting effects recent oil prices may have on the energy market in general, since the oil market remains volatile and prices unpredictable.

Energy Efficiency

15. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next intends to meet representatives of local government to discuss energy saving measures.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet local government representatives in the course of our national campaign to promote energy efficiency.

21. **Mr. Conway** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the United Kingdom's performance in achieving greater energy efficiency, compared to the performance of other countries.

Mr. David Hunt: Provisional data for 1984 show that the United Kingdom's energy efficiency improved in that year by 3 per cent., a larger improvement than was recorded by any of our major industrial competitors. This contrasts with the position in the previous 10 years when the average United Kingdom rate of increase was 2·3 per cent., a lower rate than that achieved by our competitors.

22. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the latest plans for events to mark Energy Efficiency Year 1986 and for his Department's publicity programme Monergy '86.

Mr. Peter Walker: More than 100 events have already taken place. The number of events in the pipeline is increasing fast. Details of some 700 future events are contained in the Monergy '86 information pack, copies of

which are being placed in the Library of the House. The publicity programme includes national press and television advertising and is being well supported by the advertising and promotional activities of many companies, from the nationalised fuel industries to private sector suppliers of energy efficiency equipment and services.

25. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate the aggregate annual savings which are likely to be achieved by those companies which have participated in the energy efficiency campaign.

Mr. Peter Walker: Action taken by companies which have already responded to our energy efficiency campaign is leading to savings of at least £500 million a year. Further substantial savings will result from actions stimulated during Energy Efficiency Year.

31. **Mr. Powley** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the nationwide survey on the appointment of energy managers by British business.

Mr. David Hunt: I am most encouraged by the substantial response we have received. I shall publish the results of the survey as soon as the replies have been analysed.

Polkemmet Bing

16. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what recent discussions he has had with the Scottish director of the National Coal Board about progress in clearing the Polkemmet bing.

Mr. David Hunt: I am in regular contact with the Scottish area of the NCB and am taking a close interest in progress.

Combined Heat and Power Schemes

17. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will estimate how much employment the combined heat and power schemes will provide in *(a)* the Edinburgh area and *(b)* elsewhere.

Mr. Goodlad: Estimates in Energy Paper 53 commissioned by my Department and published in 1984 indicate that additional local employment of some 3,000 jobs might result over a 12 to 15 year period from installing the heat distribution systems and consumer connections in all nine cities studied in the report. Edinburgh would account for approximately 300 extra jobs over the same timescale. Other employment would arise from the construction of new CHP plant and heat only boiler plant.

24. **Mr. Rost** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he next expects to meet the chairman of the East Midlands electricity board to discuss the board's involvement in combined heat and power schemes.

Mr. Goodlad My hon. Friend visited the Coventry office of the East Midlands electricity board on 15 January at the invitation of the chairman to hear about the board's close involvement in promoting energy efficiency including combined heat and power projects. There are no plans for a further meeting.

Housing (Insulation)

18. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the standards of insulation in British urban housing.

Mr. David Hunt: One of the purposes of Energy Efficiency Year is to draw attention to the inadequate insulation of dwellings, many of them in towns, which account for a large part of the £2 billion, of energy wasted annually in the domestic sector.

Coal Industry (Productivity)

19. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement about the latest productivity figures achieved by the National Coal Board.

Mr. Peter Walker: The National Coal Board continues to achieve weekly deep-mined productivity in excess of three tones per man shift. This is more than one third higher than the average for April 1979 when a Labour Government was last in office, and represents an impressive improvement since the end of the strike.

Offshore Supplies Industry

23. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the value of offshore fabrication orders won by companies in the north-east during 1985.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In 1984 north-east fabrication companies won orders worth £217 million out of total orders for the United Kingdom of £674 million. Outturn figures are not yet available for 1985. However, our provisional estimates indicate that north-east companies have continued to win a significant proportion of offshore fabrication work.

Coal Industry

26. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he proposes to implement the June 1983 recommendations of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission that the statutory limit on the operations of licensed opencast coal operators should be increased to 100,000 tonnes.

36. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will introduce legislation to ease or abolish the statutory limits applying to employment in, and production from, privately owned coal mines, and to abolish the royalties on such production.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no plans to introduce such legislation.

29. **Sir William van Straubenzee** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current level of coal production.

Mr. Peter Walker: Current levels of coal production are better than forecast, with output for 1985-86 expected to exceed 104 million tonnes.

37. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the output of coal per manshift at the present time; and how this compares with the output of coal per manshift in April 1979.

Mr. Peter Walker: The latest figures show that productivity reached 3·04 tonnes per man shift in the week ending 25 January 1986. This compares with an average of 2·20 tonnes per man shift for April 1979.

Mr. Jack Thompson asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has as to the average earnings of British coalminers in comparison with coalminers in other EEC countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: On the basis of information published by the statistical office of the European Communities on gross hourly earnings in October 1983 in those member states with significant hard coal industries, the National Coal Board has provided the following comparison with earnings in the United Kingdom at the same periods:

	£
Federal Republic of Germany	4·52
France	4·62
Belgium	4·18
United Kingdom	4·56

However, such a comparison is inevitably artificial, as it takes no account of a large number of factors including the number of hours worked, and differing tax and social security arrangements in member states.

40. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what discussions he has had with the National Coal Board about the new definition for measuring the economic future of pits in terms of £1·50 per gigajoule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is for the National Coal Board to determine the target production cost which it believe will supply coal at a price the market will bear. Expressing costs in £/gigajoule takes account of variations in the calorific content and therefore the value of coal.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

27. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been created, and how much investment has been attracted, by incentives offered by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Peter Walker: By the end of January 1986, NCB (Enterprise) had assisted in the creation of 4,412 job opportunities, attracting a total investment of £45·9 million.

Wind Energy

28. **Mr. Hayes** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what support his Department has given to research and development of larger wind turbines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has spent over £16 million, since 1979, on research and development into the use of wind energy for electricity generation. Most of this support has been directed to the development of large wind turbines and includes major construction projects on Orkney and at Carmarthen bay.

Industrial Energy Costs

30. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the impact on industrial energy costs of the recent fall in oil prices.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Industry is already benefiting from lower oil product prices. If lower oil prices are sustained further reductions in energy costs seem likely.

NCB (Reorganisation)

32. **Mr. Jack Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has had any discussions with the chairman of the National Coal Board regarding reorganisation of the coal board at area level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: At my right hon. Friend's meetings with the chairman of the NCB all aspects of the coal industry are discussed, including the organisation of the board's activities.

Energy Projects (EC Assistance)

33. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assistance from the European Community is currently available to British industry and local authorities for energy projects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Community support for research and development includes aid for energy demonstration projects and new technologies in the hydrocarbons sector. Energy projects can qualify for EC regional development grants and certain additional grants are available to coal areas. Loans, some at favourable rates of interest, are also available to the nuclear and coal industries.

Coal Industry (Pit Closures)

34. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many pits have been closed in Scotland since the end of the miners' strike; how many closures are contemplated in the next two years; how many jobs have been lost in the relevant period; and how many jobs have been created specifically in mining areas.

Mr. David Hunt: Individual pit closures are a matter for the National Coal Board. I understand that no pits have been closed in Scotland since March 1985 and only one proposal for closure, Polkemmet, has been made. The number of men on colliery books in Scotland has fallen from 11,263 at the end of March 1985 to 7,793 in the week ending 25 January 1986. NCB (Enterprise) Ltd has so far created 738 job opportunities in Scotland.

Offshore Supplies Industry

35. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for Energy what action he is taking to encourage the United Kingdom offshore supplies industry to take advantage of export opportunities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Experience in the North sea has qualified our offshore supply industry to compete worldwide. I believe there are substantial export opportunities. Accordingly, my Offshore Supplies Office has recently organised four conferences addressed by 12 leading oil companies and the World Bank. There was excellent attendance by the offshore supplies industry. It

is now up to the United Kingdom supply industry to take advantage of the unique opportunity these conferences have presented.

38. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the current and projected levels of activity within the United Kingdom oil-related fabrication yards.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: United Kingdom oil related fabrication yards are engaged on some 181,000 tonnes of fabrication work. It is envisaged that another 90,000 tonnes of jacket and module work will be placed in 1986.

Coal Industry (Colliery Review Procedure)

41. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has given or will give advice to the National Coal Board in regard to the response to the recommendation made following consideration of appeals under the colliery review procedures.

Mr. David Hunt: Appeals under the colliery review procedure are a matter for the National Coal Board.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the implication for the future rate of North sea oil developments of the recent fall in crude oil prices; what assessment he has made of the consequential effects on employment in the associated industries with particular regard to their geographical concentration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: It takes up to five years to develop a field, which may then be producing oil for a further 15 years. Accordingly, it is the companies' expectation of prices over such periods which matter, not the current spot rate. I believe that development and exploration in the North sea, with its attendant opportunities for British industry and employment, will continue.

National Fuel Distributors

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he has any plans to seek to bring the National Coal Board subsidiary National Fuel Distributors into private ownership; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board; and I have asked the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

Colliery Accidents

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what changes there have been in the number of serious underground accidents in British collieries in the last six months; what assessment he makes of the significance of the change; and what advice he is giving to the National Coal Board in regard to the matter.

Mr. David Hunt: The figures for fatal accidents and major injuries under ground in the latest six months for which figures are available are as follows:

Months	1985 (including contractors) Fatal	Major injuries
July	1	34
August	1	34
September	0	48
October	3	61
November	2	58
December	2	56
TOTAL	9	291

I am happy to report this improvement over the same six months in 1983, when there were 10 fatal accidents and 339 major injuries.

Colliery Manpower

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the response to his most recent redundant mineworkers' compensation arrangements indicate that there are any collieries where there is either an actual shortage of manpower or where such a shortage is likely to be experienced during 1986.

Mr. David Hunt: Manpower management is a matter for the National Coal Board. However, redundancies of men in the coal industry—as in any other industry—can occur only if jobs cease to be available.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authorities (Tendering)

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to prevent local authorities from imposing pre-conditions to tenders which have no commercial basis.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer which I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Mon (Mr. Best) on 11 February, at column 397.

Association of Metropolitan Authorities

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has given an additional grant to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in order to meet the costs arising from the proposed occupation of new headquarters at 35 Great Smith Street, London SW1.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. The Department of the Environment does not provide financial support to the Association of Metropolitan Authorities or any of the other local authority associations, which are funded by subscriptions from member authorities.

National Parks

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the land owned, including its acreage, by the Peak Park planning board.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information provided by the board is as follows:

	acres	hectares
Eastern Moors	6,500	2,590
The Roaches	975	395
North Lees	1,250	506
Minor properties (including information centres, car parks, etc.)	168	68

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total acreage of land owned by each national park authority in England and Wales.

Mrs. Rumbold: Information provided by the national park authorities is as follows:

	Acres	*Hectares*
Brecon Beacons	22,900	9,160
Dartmoor	2,971	1,188
Exmoor	7,287	2,915
Lake District	19,187	7,675
Northumberland	386·5	156·5
North York Moors	3,900	1,560
Peak District	8,893	3,557
Pembrokeshire Coast	500	200
Snowdonia	1,900	760
Yorkshire Dales	262	105

Welfare Benefits Project

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Greater London council was informed that consent for the expenditure in connection with the welfare benefits project had been refused; and how the council was informed.

Mr. Tracey: A letter announcing my right hon. Friend's decision was delivered by hand to the council's offices at County hall at approximately 3 pm on Monday 10 February 1986.

News International (Wapping)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the London Docklands Development Corporation has received any request for planning permission in respect of the erection of barbed wire fences at the News International plant at Wapping; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Planning permission for the development, including fencing, was granted by the London borough of Tower Hamlets prior to the existence of the LDDC. Certain features of the fences, however, may not comply with the permission. The LDDC has taken up the matter with News International.

Home Ownership

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the figures for home ownership by ward and postal area for Peterborough, Northampton borough, Swindon, St. Helens, Wigan, Poulton, Bolton and Bury.

Sir George Young: The percentages of households present on census night in 1981, who were owner-occupiers, appear in the ward and civil parish monitors published by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys for each county; these are available in the Library. Information is not available on a postal area basis.

GLC (Grants)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what grounds he refused his consent to expenditure by the Greater London council on a grant to the Workplace Nurseries Campaign;

(2) on what grounds he refused his consent to the Greater London council for a grant to the North Lewisham Project—Black Parents Education Group;

(3) on what grounds he refused his consent to expenditure by the Greater London council on a grant to the Barking and Dagenham Link Employment Resource Centre;

(4) on what grounds he refused his consent to expenditure by the Greater London council on a grant to the London Transport Technology Network — Routemaster.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend refused consent to these grants on the grounds that, on the basis of the information before him, they would not be a justifiable use of ratepayers' money.

Green Belt

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy not to consent to developments which could reduce the green belt in general and the green belt in Cambridgeshire in particular.

Mr. Tracey: It is already Government policy that green belts should be protected from inappropriate development. When determining green belt boundaries, local authorities should ensure that they are defensible in the longer term.

Voluntary Bodies (Transitional Funding)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes announcing details of transitional funding to voluntary groups and organisations in the metropolitan districts and London boroughs.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Following the announcement of grant allocations to the authorities concerned, which was made on Wednesday 12 February, letters will be sent to individual local authorities as soon as possible indicating which projects have been accepted as eligible for transitional grant support, and which have not. We have already begun to issue these letters.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any complaints regarding the operation of section 3(5) of the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Yes. I am aware that some owners are unhappy about this. Under the act such cases are for the local authority to decide, though owners who are not satisfied with their council's decision can take the matter to the county court. I therefore cannot comment on individual cases; but the Department's circular 28/84 issued on 7 November 1984, offered guidance to local authorities on the kind of circumstances in which they might offer repurchase under this provision. I look to local authorities to operate the Act in a reasonable way.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each local housing authority the most recent figures for *(a)* the number of applications received under the Housing Defects Act 1984, *(b)* the number of grants paid under the Act and *(c)* the number of repurchases indicating separate figures in respect of those under section 3(5).

Mr. John Patten: Eighty-five local authorities have reported that they have repurchased a total of 638 dwellings under the Act during the first half of the current financial year; details are listed. I regret that information on the number of applications for assistance, the number of grants paid, and the number of repurchases specifically under section 3(5) is not currently available.

Number of dwellings repurchased in period 1 April to 30 September 1985

Local authority	*Number*
Ashford	3
Basildon	1
Bassetlaw	14
Bath	2
Birmingham	11
Bradford	90
Braintree	1
Bristol	1
Broxbourne	1
Charnwood	1
Cheltenham	1
Chesterfield	7
Chichester	7
Chiltern	19
Colchester	1
Copeland	1
Corby	1
Crawley	2
Croydon	1
Dacorum	1
Derby	1
East Cambridgeshire	1
East Devon	4
Eastleigh	5
East Staffordshire	2
Ellesmere Port and Neston	14
Epping Forest	1
Fenland	3
Gillingham	1
Great Grimsby	9
Harrogate	3
Harrow	5
Hart	2
Havering	40
Hereford	1
Kings Lynn and West Norfolk	1
Leominster	1
Lewisham	1
Maldon	1
Mendip	3
Mid Bedfordshire	3
Mid Devon	5
Mid Suffolk	2
Northavon	3
North Cornwall	2
Northampton	3
North Hertfordshire	3
North Wiltshire	37
Plymouth	44
Portsmouth	6
Reading	23
Redbridge	1
Salisbury	2
St. Albans	22
St. Edmundsbury	1
Sedgemoor	2
South Cambridgeshire	1
Southend on Sea	1
Southampton	16
South Hams	4
South Kesteven	1
South Norfolk	1
South Somerset	10
Stafford	4
Sutton	23
Taunton Deane	33
Tendring	1
Test Valley	13
Tewkesbury	7
Thamesdown	4
The Wrekin	1
Three Rivers	6
Trafford	7
Vale of White Horse	13
Vale Royal	1
Wansdyke	5
Waverley	1
Wellingborough	1
West Somerset	9
West Wiltshire	10
Windsor and Maidenhead	2
Wokingham	20
Worthing	1
Wychavon	1
Wyre Forest	17
	638

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (Shipment)

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the possible risks associated with the shipment of the chemical polychlorinated biphenyls from Western Australia to an incineration plant in Pontypool, South Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received no representations about the possible risks associated with the shipment of polychlorinated biphenyls from Western Australia to the ReChem incineration plant at Pontypool, but I am aware that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has received a letter from the hon. Member for Torfaen, expressing his concern.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the figures on which his estimate of the local income tax rate which would need to be levied in Southwark is based; and if he will also publish *(a)* the total taxable income, and *(b)* the total number of taxpayers, in each London borough, Scottish region, and English and Welsh county.

Mr. Waldegrave: I will write to the hon. Member.

Chatham Dockyard

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to make a further announcement about the designation of an enterprise zone in part of the non-historic dockyard at Chatham.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Statutory invitations, under schedule 32 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980, have today been sent to Rochester-upon-Medway city council and Gillingham borough council to prepare jointly a scheme with a view to designation as an enterprise zone of some 24 hectares — 60 acres — of development land in the non-historic dockyard at Chatham.

This invitation marks the start of the formal procedures leading to designation. I very much hope to see this zone

in operation by the summer. I am sure that it will prove an important incentive in attracting private sector investment to the revitalisation of the dockyard.

Copies of the press notice announcing this together with a map of the proposed enterprise zone are being placed in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings he has had recently with Mr. David Lea of the Trades Union Congress committee on nuclear waste; what views were put to him there on disposal of nuclear waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 14 February 1986, c. *589*]: I met Mr. Lea most recently on 11 February. He indicated the concern of the Trades Union Congress that the Government might announce potential sites for the disposal of low and intermediate level radioactive wastes at a time when a study of the best practicable environmental option (BPEO), which was directly relevant, was nearing completion. After discussion Mr. Lea agreed to the early publication of the BPEO study in the setting that this would have priority over any announcement on sites. I indicated that I understood the position of the Trades Union Congress, even though I was not in a position to make a specific commitment.

Building Research Advisory Services

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any representations concerning the issuing of letters of assessment from the building research advisory services; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 14 February 1986, c. *590*]: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, myself and my ministerial colleagues regularly receive representations concerning the building research advisory services, and particularly the fire research station advisory service, from hon. Members and industrial organisations.

The fire research station advisory service has for many years been operating under heavy demand of work, and intends to continue operating effectively in the future. Particular emphasis is given to assisting United Kingdom manufacturers with export business.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. John Mark. Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans for an initiative similar to the London Docklands development corporation in any other parts of the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: None at the moment.

Council House Sales

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about right-to-buy problems where more than one authority have a legal interest.

Sir George Young: Representations have been received from several hon. Members, and from others, drawing attention to the position of tenants who cannot exercise the right to buy because their immediate landlord has only a leasehold interest. An order under section 30 of the Housing and Building Control Act 1984 is in preparation. It will enable such tenants to buy where their superior landlord is a body against which the right can be exercised and has the necessary interest to sell or grant a long lease.

London Boroughs (Transitional Funding)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir G. Finsberg) on 12 February, he will list for each London borough the number of projects and the total amount involved in their application to his Department for transitional grant funding.

Sir George Young: Not all the bids were presented on an entirely comparable basis, but with that reservation the information is as follows:

Authority	*Value of bid (£k)*	*Number of projects*
City	43	2
Barking & Dagenham	17	3
Barnet	168	10
Bexley	44	3
Brent	1,526	46
Bromley	92	6
Camden	4,420	119
Croydon	106	8
Ealing	637	27
Enfield	115	6
Greenwich	1,424	37
Hackney	2,539	83
Hammersmith & Fulham	697	34
Haringey	3,374	101
Harrow	10	2
Havering	60	3
Hillingdon	14	2
Hounslow	299	10
Islington	2,775	101
Kensington & Chelsea	716	23
Kingston	136	3
Lambeth	2,978	105
Lewisham	1,460	63
Merton	305	9
Newham	1,667	46
Redbridge	140	6
Richmond	72	5
Southwark	1,900	80
Tower Hamlets	1,000	90
Waltham Forest	449	13
Wandsworth	1,873	37

Nature Conservancy Council

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any procedures are followed by his Department to verify the accuracy of the annual reports of the Nature Conservancy Council before such reports are laid before Parliament.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Nature Conservancy Council is required by the Nature Conservancy Act 1973 to prepare an annual report each year and for my right hon. Friend to place this before Parliament. It is for the Nature Conservancy Council to verify the accuracy of its reports.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Statistics

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the number of crimes of violence committed against women and children.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the age and sex of victims of crime is not regularly collected centrally except in respect of homicide. The only other information available relates to certain offences defined as being committed against women or children, such as rape or child destruction. Information on these offences is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" (tables 2.8 and 2.9 of the issue for 1984, Cmnd. 9621).

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any proposals to collect additional information about the number, age, sex and ethnic origins of victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: We have no current plans to increase the centrally collated information on victims beyond that supplied by the British crime survey, the regular collection of statistics on homicide and that available to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; information from all these sources is published. However, we do intend to publish an analysis of data available from the 18 police forces which record the fullest information; and information about victims is collected in specific research studies when appropriate.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship under *(a)* section (5) and *(b)* section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981 were (i) received, (ii) granted and (iii) outstanding between the following dates (1) 1 January 1983 to 31 March 1983, (2) 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984, (3) 1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985 and (4) 1 April 1985 to the present time.

Mr. Waddington: The following is the information requested for section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981:

Applications under section 4(5)

	Received	*Granted*
1 January 1983 to 31 March 1983	0	0
1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984	0	0
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985	237	0
1 April 1985 to 31 January 1986	221	1

Two hundred and thirty-seven applications were outstanding at 31 March 1985; 456 applications were outstanding at 31 January 1986. One application has been refused.

The number of applications granted under section 5 of the British Nationality Act 1981 during the same period was:

Applications granted under section 5

	Number
1 January 1983 to 31 March 1983	1,292
1 April 1983 to 31 March 1984	5,819
1 April 1984 to 31 March 1985	981
1 April 1985 to 31 March 1986	234

Corresponding information on applications received and outstanding is not available.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department into which account in his Department the fees accruing from applications made under *(a)* section 5 of the British Nationality Act 1981 and *(b)* section 4(5) of the Act are paid.

Mr. Waddington: Applications under section 5 of the British Nationality Act 1981 are made to and processed by the governor of Gibraltar, for a fee decided by and credited to the Government of Gibraltar. The fees for applications under section 4(5) of the British Nationality Act 1981 are taken as appropriations in aid into class IX vote 7, and are accounted for in the appropriation account for the vote.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for British citizenship were received, granted and outstanding, respectively, in each month since March 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The available information is as follows:

Applications for British citizenship

	Received	*Granted*	*Outstanding*
1985			
April	4,088	3,702	—
May	3,799	2,916	—
June	3,259	3,447	—
July	4,157	4,811	*35,598
August	3,900	3,958	—
September	3,533	4,097	—
October	4,398	5,445	—
November	4,622	6,577	*32,678
December	3,656	2,911	—
1986			
January	3,892	3,779	—

* Outstanding applications are counted by a periodic stocktake.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost per application of processing applications for *(a)* adult registration, *(b)* naturalisation and *(c)* registration of minor children in (i) 1985-86 and (ii) 1986-87.

Mr. Waddington: The average estimated cost per application in 1985-86 for the registration of adults and minors is £55; for the naturalisation of the spouses of British citizens it is £55; and for other naturalisations it is £160. Estimates for 1986-87 are currently being prepared in the light of the overall planning assumptions announced in the White Paper on public expenditure published on 15 January.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent the two workshops at Holloway prison were in operation in the most recent week for which information is available; how many prisoners were employed in them; and for how many hours on average they worked.

Mr. Mellor: In the week ending 7 February 1986 the assembly workshop was closed and the light textiles workshop employed 17 inmates for an average of 1½ hours.

Drunkenness

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to which police forces have arrangements with health authorities or non-statutory alcohol agencies to assist with drunkenness offenders who are repeatedly coming to the notice of the police.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am aware of such arrangements in some parts of the country but no reliable information is held centrally.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to how many police forces in England and Wales are operating cautioning schemes for drunkenness offenders; and if he will list those forces in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No comprehensive central records are maintained, since the establishment of such schemes is a matter for the operational judgment of individual chief officers. I am aware that cautioning schemes for drunkenness offenders at present are operated by police forces in Bedfordshire, Cleveland, Devon and Cornwall, Dorset, Humberside, Merseyside, the Metropolitan police district, Northumbria, north Wales, north Yorkshire, south Wales, Thames Valley and Wiltshire.

Police (Complaints)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is satisfied with the operation of the system for complaints against the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Part IX of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which introduced new arrangements for the handling of complaints against the police, has been in force only since 29 April 1985. Many of the cases completed by the authority started under the previous arrangements. I am, however, encouraged by the way in which the new authority has established its independence, and by the prominent role it is playing in the supervision and assessment of investigations.

My right hon. Friend has recently agreed to strengthen the Police Complaints Authority by appointing a further member, and hopes to make a further statement on this shortly.

Sexual Offences Act 1985

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidance he has given to chief constables concerning implementation of the Sexual Offences Act 1985;

(2) if he will make a statement on the progress of the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act 1985.

Mr. Mellor: With the exception of that part of section 1(1) which section 5(6) provides shall not take effect until section 3 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 is in force in the area concerned, the Sexual Offences Act 1985 came into force on 16 September 1985. The Act will come fully into force on 1 April 1986 in the areas specified in the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985 (Commencement No. 1) Order 1985 (SI 1985/1849), and elsewhere later in the year. Guidance was given to chief officers of police in Home Office circular No. 52/1985 dated 2 September 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Gloucestershire County Constabulary

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current police establishment for the Gloucestershire county constabulary; and whether he has received any request for an increase in the establishment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The authorised establishment of the Gloucestershire constabulary is 1,164. We have not received an application recently from the Gloucestershire police authority for an increase in the authorised establishment of the force. Forty-eight additional police posts have been approved for the force since May 1979.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report*, the names of all neighbourhood watch schemes in the Metropolitan police district by police divisions.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In view of the significant increase in the number of neighbourhood watch schemes in the Metropolitan police district from 1,282 at the end of 1984 to 3,770 at the end of last year, the information requested is no longer held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Oakham Police Station

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is now in a position to announce a starting date for the rebuilding of Oakham police station.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Leicestershire police authority was given approval in November 1985 to start planning on a replacement police station at Oakham. It is not yet possible to say when building can begin; this will depend on the relative operational priority of the scheme compared with the many others awaiting a building start date and on the availability of capital resources in the years ahead. Schemes are normally given a building start date two to three years in advance; thus police authorities were notified in November 1985 of the schemes which can start in 1988-89.

Passports

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many valid British visitors' passports are currently held; how many of these are held in respect of families; how many such passports were issued in each of the last 10 years; what was the scale of fees applicable in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: British visitors passports are valid for one year. The information available, which relates to the number issued, is given in the following table:

Year	*British Visitors Passports issued*	*Those where spouse included*	*¶Fee £*
1976-77	862,800	Not known	*4.00
1977-78	820,751	Not known	†5.00
1978-79	993,400	Not known	‡5·50
1979-80	1,130,976	Not known	5·50
1980-81	1,162,740	Not known	5·50
1981-82	1,768,411	Not known	5·50
1982-83	1,388,845	Not known	5·50
1983-84	1,426,966	¶36,656	‖•7·50
1984-85	1,526,664	252,537	7·50

Year	British Visitors Passports issued	Those where spouse included	¶Fee £
1985-86 (estimated)	1,420,000	210,000	7·50

* As from 15.3.1976.
† As from 7.2.1977.
‡ As from 6.3.1978.
‖ As from 14.11.83 (£11·50).
¶ 14 November 1983 the same fee was charged irrespective of whether or not the holder's spouse was included on the passport. It is only since then, therefore, that it has been possible to identify the number of family passports issued.
• Fee where spouse included.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many valid family passports are currently held; what is their duration; how many such passports were issued in each of the last 10 years; what scale of fees was applicable in each year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: British family passports are valid for 10 years. The information available, which relates to the number issued, is given in the following table.

Year	Passports issued¶	Those where spouse of holder included	Fee• Standard passport £	Fee• Jumbo passport £
1976-77	1,199,339	Not known	8	*16
1977-78	1,244,974	Not known	10	†20
1978-79	1,637,373	Not known	11	‡22
1979-80	2,010,722	Not known	11	22
1980-81	2,186,211	Not known	11	22
1981-82	1,757,989	Not known	11	22
1982-83	2,016,404	Not known	11	22
1983-84	1,975,225	•65,852	(■22·50) 15	‖(■45) 30
1984-85	1,818,704	144,850	(■22·50) 15	(■45) 30
*1985-86	1,867,000	196,000	(■22·50) 15	(■45) 30

* As from 15 March 1976.
† As from 7 February 1977.
‡ As from 6 March 1978.
‖ As from 14 November 1983.
¶ Standard 30 page and jumbo 94 page passports.
• Until 14 November 1983 the same fee was charged whether or not the holder's spouse was included on the passport. It is only since then, therefore, that it has been possible to identify the number of family passports issued.
■ Fee where spouse included.
* Estimated.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 3 February, any guidelines are issued to passport offices about the circumstances and manner in which they may use their discretion in respect of family passports.

Mr. Waddington: Yes. In the sense indicated in my reply of 3 February, at column 6, to my hon. Friend.

Prison Workshops

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are employed in prison workshops; what is the average number of hours worked by each prisoner so employed; and if he will make a statement on the future prospects for prison workshops.

Mr. Mellor: In the last quarter of 1985 the average number of inmates employed in prison industrial workshops was 8,980. The average net working hours per inmate employed was 19·4 hours a week. With regard to the future of prison industries, I have as yet nothing to add to the reply given to a question by the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) on 22 January 1986 at column *218*.

Magistrates Courts (Case Delays)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the national information collection system described in circular HOC 67/1984 LCDJ(84)1 can now indicate waiting times for cases to be heard in magistrates' courts; and whether delays, broken down by types of offence, will be published.

Mr. Mellor: The first national collection took place in June 1985 and the second in October 1985. Justices' clerks have been supplied with statistics for the petty sessional divisions for which they are responsible. A statistical bulletin summarising the June data, and including a breakdown by type of offence, is in course of preparation and is expected to be published soon.

Prisons (Drug Abuse)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that adequate measures are taken in Her Majesty's prisons to end drug abuse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We attach much importance to keeping unauthorised drugs out of prisons and are determined that all appropriate counter-measures should be taken. Methods of detecting drugs within establishments are kept continuously under review. Regular and special searches are conducted, including the use of dogs specially trained in drug detection work. The number of trained dogs has been increased. The police investigate cases where there is reason to believe that a visitor intends to smuggle drugs into an establishment. The quality of the information available centrally about the incidence of drugs in prisons has been improved. Staff training on drugs has been improved, including the production of a new training package aimed specifically at the problems and need of the prison service which was issued to all establishments last year.

Prisoners (Training)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison staff were employed to teach trades and skills to prisoners in each of the years 1980 to 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The numbers of prison staff employed to each trades and skills to prisoners on 1 January in each of the years 1980 to 1985 were:

	Civilian instructors	Prison officer instructors	Total
1980	882	573	1,455
1981	942	575	1,517
1982	956	556	1,512
1983	1,004	500	1,504
1984	1,048	433	1,481
1985	1,057	422	1,479

Immigration

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many immigration cases were

referred to him by hon. and right hon. Members in the last quarter of 1985 and so far in 1986; and of that number, how many have been kept in detention;

(2) how many immigration cases were referred to him by hon. and right hon. Members in 1983, 1984 and 1985; and of that number, how many were kept in detention in each of those years.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Bangladeshi immigrants placed in detention on arrival in the United Kingdom were transferred to the Ashford remand centre in 1983, 1984 and 1985; and how many such immigrants are currently detained there.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to Bangladeshi citizens who were detained either after refusal of leave to enter or having been required to submit to further examination on arrival, and is as follows:

	Number
1983	17
1984	16
1985	147

At 2pm on 13 February seven Bangladeshi citizens were so detained.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Bangladeshi immigrants were kept in detention on arrival in the United Kingdom in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Waddington: The figures available relate to the number of citizens of Bangladesh detained overnight in port detention accommodation or police cells after seeking leave to enter the United Kingdom, and are as follows:

	Number
1983	129
1984	157
1985	1,173

The figures for 1983 and 1984 do not include persons detained at Queens building, Heathrow. Some element of double counting will be included where the same person was detained in more than one centre.

Police (Expenditure)

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the anticipated total expenditure on the police in England and Wales in each of the financial years 1985-86 and 1986-87.

Mr. Hurd: The latest available information was given in my reply of 19 December 1985 to the right hon. Member at column *273*.

As I stated in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 11 February, at column *392*, I intend to increase the proportion of police expenditure met by central Government from 50 per cent. to 51 per cent. in 1986-87, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will be making a further £22 million of block grant available in England. These grant changes will help all police authorities provide an effective police service without placing too great a burden on the ratepayers. Decisions on individual force budgets are the responsibility of police authorities.

Community Radio

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is now in a position to announce the successful applicants for experimental community radio licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. My right hon. Friend has just received the report of the advisory panel on community radio and will make an announcement when he has had time to study it.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he expects any community radio stations funded by the BBC to be funded through advertising; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None of the applications for licences under the forthcoming experiment comtemplates a community radio station being financed in whole or in part by the BBC.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when he receives the report from the advisory panel on community radio, he will place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. This would not be sensible. The panel prepared its report on the basis that it would not be published.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to ensure that applicants for community radio licences do not have an interest in more than one station, are not groups in which independent television or local radio companies have a majority interest, or are not groups of which political parties or overtly political organisations are part, joint or full owners.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The criteria for community radio outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary on 25 July 1985, at columns *670-71*, precluded the issue of licences to individuals or groups who have an interest in more than one station, to groups in which independent television or local radio companies have a majority interest, or to groups of which local authorities or political parties are part, joint or full owners. The advisory panel on community radio has had these prohibitions in mind in considering the applications for experimental community radio licences.

Citizenship

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the actual income and expenditure accounts for the administration of nationality applications for 1984-85 and the estimated income and expenditure account for 1985-86.

Mr. Waddington: I have today placed in the Library a copy of the nationality fees memorandum and trading account for the 12 months ended 31 March 1985. A copy of the nationality fees budget income and expenditure account for the year ending 31 March 1986 was placed in the Library in March last year.

Policing (Humberside)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what additional resources will be available for policing in Humberside as a result of his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 392.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to a question from the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Mr. Hargreaves) on 12 February at column *463*. The budget for the Humberside police is a matter for the Humberside police committee.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what current financial assistance his Department makes for victim support schemes.

Mr. Mellor: In the current financial year the Home Office has made a grant of £126,000 to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes (NAVSS). There is at present no provision for grants from the Home Office to local victims support schemes, although a number are receiving assistance from other Departments under a variety of general Government programmes. In the financial year 1986-87, however, the Home Office plans to provide, in addition to the annual grant to the NAVSS, £136,000 for local schemes which are experiencing particular financial difficulties. The money will be paid to NAVSS, which will be responsible for determining individual applications from local schemes, and will be additional to the grant which NAVSS will receive towards its own programme of work.

Remembrance Ceremony, Whitehall

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, in pursuance of the reply of 27 January, *Official Report*, column 375, when the hon. Member will receive a reply to his letter of 12 November regarding the Remembrance ceremony in Whitehall.

Mr. Hurd: Other Departments are involved, but I hope to reply to the hon. Member very shortly.

Dr. Frank Skuse

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what age was Dr. Frank Skuse, a forensic scientist at the Home Office Laboratory at Chorley, upon his retirement on October 1985.

Mr. Hurd: Dr. Skuse was aged 50.

Prevention of Terrorism Act (Sikhs)

Mr. Ground asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act against members of the Sikh community settled in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since 11 October 1985 the number of arrests under the Prevention of Terrorism Act of people appearing to be Sikhs is 20.

Leicestershire Constabulary

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the actual and authorised establishment for Leicestershire constabulary; and whether he has received any request for an increase in police manning levels for Leicestershire constabulary.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The authorised establishment of the Leicestershire constabulary is 1,733. We have not received an application recently from the Leicestershire police authority for an increase in the authorised establishment of the force. On 31 December 1985 the strength of the force, including authorised supernumerary posts, was 1,750.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional places have been allocated or are envisaged for Leicestershire constabulary on the basis of the additional sums recently announced for police expenditure.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is the responsibility of the Leicestershire police authority to fix the authorised establishment of the force, subject to my right hon. Friend's approval. The changes in police grant and block grant which my right hon. Friend announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) on 11 February at column *392*, should help the police authority in maintaining police and civilian manpower levels.

Paul Hill

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what was Paul Hill's weight when he was admitted to prison; and what it is today.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Hill's weight on first reception into prison custody on 5 December 1974 was 125 lb. When asked on 14 February Mr. Hill declined to be weighed and it is thus impossible to provide the information sought about his current weight.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what specific breach of prison discipline Paul Hill, a prisoner at Gartree, was transferred to Lincoln temporarily in the interests of maintaining good order and discipline at Gartree prison.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Hill was transferred temporarily in the interests of good order and discipline; it is not alleged that he had committed an offence against prison discipline.

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many days Paul Hill has spent on temporary transfer to Lincoln prison in the interests of maintaining good order and discipline at Gartree prison or separated from other prisoners since the commencement of his sentence.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Hill has been transferred temporarily from Gartree prison to Lincoln prison for one period totalling 27 days.

The readily available information shows that Mr. Hill has been segregated under prison rule 43 in the interests of good order and discipline for a total of 571 days; in addition, he has been awarded a total of 178 days cellular confinement. Information about other occasions when he has been segregated from other prisoners, for example under prison rule 48 when awaiting adjudication, is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Interception of Communications Act 1985

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the tribunal for appeals under the provisions of the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will be set up; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I expect to make an announcement shortly about the coming into force of the Interception of Communications Act, including the establishment of the tribunal for which it makes provisions.

Drugs (Offences)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the total number of convictions for drug-related offences by *(a)* adults and *(b)* young people under 17 years of age in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the numbers of persons found guilty in the United Kingdom of drugs offences in 1984, the latest year for which information is available, is given by age group in table 2.11 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs, United Kingdom, Supplementary Tables, 1984". In 1984, 401 persons aged under 17 and 22,481 persons aged 17 and over were found guilty of drugs offences.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the total number of convictions for offences of supplying drugs in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is given in table 8 of "Statistics of the Misuse of Drugs in the United Kingdom, 1984 (Home Office Statistical Bulletin 23/85). In 1984, 1,426 persons were found guilty of unlawful supply of drugs.

News International (Work Permits)

Mr. Litherland asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if Charlie MacNeil, John Cowley, Reg Limb, Phil Stevens, Adam Conrad and Norman Jamieson, employees of News International and Commonwealth citizens, have valid work permits to reside in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waddington: It is not our practice nor that of my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment to disclose information of this kind about individuals.

Drug Addict

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is able to provide a breakdown by each borough of the number of registered drug addicts in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the share of public spending *(a)* including transfer payments and *(b)* excluding transfer payments in the United Kingdom economy in the years 1976 to 1985.

Mr. MacGregor: The figures are summarised in the following table:

	General government expenditure as a percentage of GDP	*General government expenditure on goods and services as a percentage of GDP*
1976-77	46	25½
1977-78	42	23½
1978-79	43	22½
1979-80	43½	22½
1980-81	46	24
1981-82	46½	23½
1982-83	46½	23½
1983-84	46	23½
1984-85	45½	23½
1985-86*	44½	23

* Estimated outturn.

General government expenditure covers spending by central and local government; it includes transfer payments such as social security benefits. As a percentage of GDP, it shows the extent to which the nation's resources are flowing through government. General government expenditure on goods and services is a narrower measure and excludes transfer payments; as a percentage of GDP it shows the extent to which the nation's resources are being directly absorbed by government.

Mr. E. Harvey

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, pursuant to the discussions between the Deputy Collector of Her Majesty's Customs at Nottingham and Mr. E. Harvey of Hillside Farm, Ragdale, Leicestershire, he will outline the obstacles to Mr. Harvey being permitted to instal two tanks on his digger, one containing white diesel for use on public highways, and the other containing red diesel for use on construction sites; and whether he will seek to rectify this matter.

Mr. Brooke: With specified exceptions, vehicles licensed to haul goods on public highways must always use fully duty paid derv (white diesel) as fuel. Entitlement to use lower-dutied red diesel in any circumstances depends on a more restricted licence (in this case a digging machine licence) and this would debar the hauling of goods on the public highway. To change the law to allow the fitting of two fuel tanks would seriously undermine control of misuse of the lower dutied red diesel.

Mr. Latham asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will now direct Her Majesty's Customs and Excise that Mr. E. Harvey of Hillside Farm, Ragdale, Leicestershire, be permitted to use his digger to tow a van to and from building sites provided that white diesel is used as fuel on the highway and that Mr. Harvey obtains a restricted heavy goods licence; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: There is no objection to Mr. Harvey doing what is proposed. However, vehicles licensed as restricted heavy goods vehicles must always use derv (white diesel) as fuel, including when working off the highway.

Mr. Anthony Miller (Correspondence)

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why the Financial Secretary has not yet replied to the letter dated 11 December from Mr. Anthony Miller, chairman of the taxation committee of the National Federation of Self Employed; and when a full reply will be dispatched.

Mr. Moore: I have now sent a reply to Mr. Miller.

Ticket Sales (VAT)

Mr. Parry asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received seeking zero rating of value added tax on ticket sales.

Mr. Brooke: A few representations have been received urging VAT relief for admission charges to sporting and cultural events.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice his Department has given to nationalised industries that own or manage sites that are surplus to requirement or derelict land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the manner of the answer given on 18 April 1985, *Official Report*, column *243*, he will publish and update the tax relief figures for 1985-86.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c. *540*]: The direct revenue cost of income tax relief at rates in excess of the basic rate in 1985-86 is estimated to be about £280 million for mortgage interest relief and about £210 million for relief on employees' and self-employed pension contributions. The direct revenue cost of these reliefs taken in combination is estimated at about £520 million. The corresponding estimates for 1984-85 have been revised and are: mortgage interest relief £210 million, pension contributions £180 million, both reliefs in combination £420 million.

THE ARTS

Voluntary Bodies

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list in the *Official Report* those voluntary bodies and organisations assisted by his Department with grant aid in the last financial year for which figures are available and the size of the grant so given.

Mr. Luce: In 1984-85 (the last complete year for which outturn figures are available), the Office of Arts and Libraries made the following direct grants towards the administrative costs of arts organisations which could be classed as voluntary bodies according to the common definition:

	£
The National Art Collections Fund	7,030
The Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts	10,500

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list in the *Official Report* the governmental agencies to which his Department gives grant aid which in turn provide financial support for voluntary bodies and organisations and the size of the grant so given in the last financial year for which figures are available.

Mr. Luce: The Office of Arts and Libraries makes grants to a number of non-departmental public bodies which in turn provide financial support to other arts bodies and organisations, some of which could be regarded as voluntary. The grants planned for 1985-86 are mainly listed in the supply Estimates, class V, vote 10.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Minister for the Arts if he will outline the steps which his Department takes to ensure that grant aid given to voluntary bodies and organisations, whether directly or indirectly, is not used for political purposes.

Mr. Luce: Grants are given in accordance with the aims and objectives of the arts and libraries programme described in chapter 3.13 of the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702), and not for political purposes. It is the practice of the Department and of the grant-giving bodies which it funds to specify the purpose of the grant at the outset, and to take appropriate steps in each case to satisfy itself that the grant is spent in accordance with that purpose.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts, if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Luce: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

South Bank Board

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts why the Arts Council has still not declared the level of funding for the South Bank board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The South Bank board only received full details of GLC expenditure on the concert halls comparatively recently, and it has had to make its case to the Arts Council. That case is now being considered, together with other applications for post-abolition funding.

The Arts (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts (1) if, when he next meets the chairman of the Arts Council, he will discuss with him the delays in notification to Arts organisations on Merseyside of their grant allocations for the financial year 1986-87;

(2) if he is satisfied with the progress of negotiations between the Arts Council and the successor local authority on Merseyside.

Mr. Luce: I met representatives of the various arts bodies when I visited Merseyside on 13 February, and I undertook to convey to the chairman of the Arts Council their anxiety to have an early announcement on grant allocations. I made it clear that the delay among district councils in deciding to commit themselves to a share of funding the arts on Merseyside was an obstacle to an early announcement, and that I looked forward to seeing these decisions taken as soon as possible.

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts how many Arts organisations currently in receipt of Merseyside county council grants have been informed of the level of funding they can expect from successor bodies in the financial year commencing April 1986.

Mr. Luce: None.

Ethnic Minority Arts

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the promotion of ethnic minority arts in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I commend the recent initiative of the Arts Council in issuing an action plan in respect of the needs of ethnic minorities, and inviting its client bodies to consider how these can be met.

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts how many hon. Members have made representations to him concerning the future of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra.

Mr. Luce: Eleven.

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts if he will list in the *Official Report* the representations he has received against the closure of the Liverpool philharmonic hall at the latest date.

Mr. Luce: I have received to date 42 letters and one petition of 96 signatures on the subject of the future of the Liverpool philharmonic. Included in this total are representations from the following bodies:

City of Liverpool
Metropolitan borough of Wirral
Musicians' Union
National Campaign for the Arts
Royal Philharmonic Society.

DEFENCE

Research

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of

the universities and other educational institutions currently involved in joint research council/Ministry of Defence research projects.

Mr. Norman Lamont The new joint Research Council/MOD research grants scheme comes into operation on 1 April 1986. The research councils and MOD are currently evaluating 132 applications for funding from 40 universities and other institutions of higher education.

Aircraft Sales (Saudi Arabia)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence, following the fall in the price of oil, whether British Petroleum and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group are still participating in the scheme to finance the sale of Tornado and other aircraft for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in return for crude oil.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The means by which the Government of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia are generating funds for the purchase of Tornado and other aircraft are matters for that Government. They do not, however, involve Her Majesty's Government or the aircraft manufacturers taking title to oil as payment.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, following the fall in world oil prices, Her Majesty's Government are considering a different offset agreement for the sale of Tornados and other aircraft to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the financial effect of the drop in oil prices on the proposed sale of Tornados and other aircraft to the kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Lower oil prices, even if sustained, will have no effect on the price paid by the kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the aircraft.

Tucano Trainer Aircraft

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence what requests he has received from Shorts of Belfast for further moneys to finance the Tucano Royal Air Force trainer project.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

ROF Birtley

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, in order to reduce the need for redundancies at Royal Ordnance Factory, Birtley, he will make it his policy to seek to transfer royal ordnance factory work placed by his Department to that factory from other royal ordnance factories currently working overtime.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The organisation of work within the Royal Ordnance plc group is entirely a matter for the company.

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what steps his Department is prepared to take to offset further job losses at the Royal Ordnance Factory, Birtley.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the statements which I made in replying to the debate on the Army on 30 January 1986, at columns 1180-81.

Jordan (Armaments Contract)

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the earliest date that work can commence on the Jordan armaments contract.

Mr. Norman Lamont: A memorandum of understanding was signed in September 1985 between Jordan and the United Kingdom providing for United Kingdom Government assistance with the supply of a wide range of military equipment. The contracts to be covered by the MOU, which are being progressively placed, will provide for the commencement of work as negotiated between the companies concerned and the Jordanian Government.

RNAY Fleetlands

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether a decision has been made with regard to the introduction of private contractors to miscellaneous activities in the naval aircraft support area RNAY Fleetlands.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether a decision has been reached as to the possible transfer of responsibility for mechanical handling equipment from CED to DGST (N) RNAY Fleetlands.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No. Proposals concerning the future management responsibility for mechanical handling equipment throughout naval shore establishments have been put to the trades unions. We hope to reach decisions shortly.

RN Captain (Pay)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the salary of a Captain RN on 1 January 1979 and 1 January 1986; and what is the percentage difference in real terms.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The salary for a captain RN on these dates was as follows:

	1 January 1979 £	*1 January 1986* £
Maximum (after 6 years)	11,545	29,401
Minimum (on appointment)	9,746	24,426

The increase in real terms over the period by comparison with the retail prices index is 72 per cent. on the maximum of the scale (68 per cent. on the minimum).

RIMPAC Naval Exercise

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Royal Navy is adopting in the RIMPAC naval exercise; and if this will involve participation in the shelling of Kaho'olawe.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces informed the House on 4 February 1986, at column *122*, this exercise is sponsored by the United States navy and the release of public information about it is a matter for the USN.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the Royal Navy will be involved in continuing participation in other RIMPAC naval exercises.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces informed the House

on 4 February 1986, at column *122*, Exercise RIMPAC is sponsored by the United States navy, and invitations to participate in future RIMPAC naval exercises are a matter for the USN.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence when each of the Royal Navy warships participating in RIMPAC will be departing; and from which ports.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces informed the House on 4 February 1986, at column *122*, the Royal Navy surface warships taking part in Exercise RIMPAC are planned to be Her Majesty's ships, Illustrious, Beaver, Manchester, and Amazon, which are due to leave Portsmouth and Devonport early in April on the first leg of the Royal Navy task group deployment to the north Pacific, far east, Australasia and Indian ocean areas.

Ships Containing Chemical Weapons

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish in the *Official Report* the date on which the document entitled "Damage to Ships Containing Chemical Weapons anz-13585", became open for inspection by members of the public.

Mr. Norman Lamont: On 20 December 1985.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Widows' Allowance

Mr. Skinner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many widows received widows' allowance in 1984 and 1985; and what was the total amount of widow's allowance paid out by his Department in each year.

Mr. Major: The available information is as follows:

	Number of awards of widow's allowance	*Total benefit cost† £ million*
Year ending 30 September 1983*	60,690	—
Financial year 1984-85		87
1985-86 (latest estimate)		86

* Latest information available.
† Includes child dependency additions payable with widow's allowance.

SERPS

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the minimum state earnings-related pension scheme pension currently in payment; how many people are in receipt of it; and how many people are currently in receipt of £0 to £1, £1 to £2, £2 to £3 and each £ band per week to the maximum current weekly payment.

Mr. Major: The following table sets out the numbers of people receiving state earnings-related pension scheme additional pensions by size of payment. Information is not readily available on the minimum additional pension currently in payment, and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Amount of additional pension (£ per week)	*Numbers of pensioners ('000)*
Under 1	733
1-1·99	299
2-2·99	118
3-3·99	84
4-4·99	63
5-5·99	44
6-6·99	33
7-7·99	21
8 and over	49

Information is not available in the form requested for amounts above £8 per week. The maximum possible additional pension is £20·87 per week.

Health Care (Costs)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual expenditure per person on primary health care in *(a)* Waltham Forest and *(b)* Brighton; and how these figures compare with the national average.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following are the latest available figures:

*Expenditure per head of population on primary health care**

District health authority	*1984-85 £*
Waltham Forest	87
Brighton	90
Average for district health authorities (England)	83

* Current expenditure on community health services plus net expenditure on family practitioner services. The latter expenditure cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts but has been included (pro-rata to population) from the annual accounts of the family practitioner committees which account for it.

Grant Claims (Walthamstow)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for *(a)* death grant and *(b)* maternity grant were made at the Walthamstow office in each year from 1980-81 onwards.

Mr. Major: The information relating to the number of claims to death grant and maternity grant (non-contributory maternity grant from July 1982) in the years from April 1980 to date is as follows:

	Death grant	*Maternity grant*
1980-81	1,809	1,673
1981-82	1,436	1,550
1982-83	1,996	2,210
1983-84	1,589	1,788
1984-85	1,665	1,905
*1985-86	1,106	1,404

* To 14 January 1986.

Constant Attendance Allowance

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are currently in receipt of constant attendance allowance at each of the four rates of allowance.

Mr. Newton: At 30 September 1982 (the latest date for which information is available) the estimated figures are as follows:

	Number
Part-time Rate	450
Normal Maximum Rate	1,000
Intermediate Rate	530
Exceptional Rate	270

Special Hardship Allowance

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each percentile of disablement between 1 per cent. and 20 per cent. and for each 5 percentile of disablement between 20 per cent. and 100 per cent., how many persons are currently in receipt of special hardship allowance.

Mr. Newton: Awards of disablement benefit for disablement of 20 per cent. or over are rounded to the nearest 10 per cent. In the year ending 30 September 1983 (the latest year for which information is available) the estimated figures are as follows:

Disablement	*Number of recipients*
per cent.	
1	1,470
2	4,600
3	9,780
4	2,360
5	20,090
6	1,800
7	6,310
8	3,530
9	580
10	26,290
11	530
12	2,780
13	550
14	560
15	9,760
16	260
17	480
18	420
19	120
20	18,800
30	14,280
40	7,930
50	4,690
60	3,270
70	1,990
80	1,270
90	470
100	Nil

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each prescribed industrial disease and for each 5 percentile of disablement between 0 per cent. and 100 per cent., how many persons are in receipt of (i) disablement benefit and (ii) special hardship allowance.

Mr. Newton: Figures are not available for each prescribed disease showing levels of disablement or receipt of special hardship allowance. The table shows the number of recipients of disablement benefit for each prescribed disease at 30 September 1983 (the latest date for which figures are available).

Brief description of prescribed diseases	*Number of beneficiaries*
Lead poisoning	—
Manganese poisoning	—
Phosphorus poisoning	—
Arsenic poisoning	—
Mercury poisoning	—
Carbon bisulphide poisoning	—
Poisoning by benzene or a homologue	—
Poisoning by a nitro-, amino-, chloro-derivative of benzene; nitrochlorobenzene	10
Poisoning by dinitrophenol	—
Poisoning by tetrachloroethane	—
Poisoning by tri-cresyl phosphate	10
Poisoning by tri-phenyl phosphate	—
Poisoning by diethylene dioxide (dioxan)	—
Poisoning by methyl bromide	—
Poisoning by chlorinated naphthalene	—
Poisoning by nickel carbonyl	—
Poisoning by nitrous fumes	20
Poisoning by gonioma kamassi	—
Anthrax	10
Glanders	—
Infection by leptospira	—
Ankylostomiasis	10
Dystrophy of cornea*	—
Localised new skin growth*	10
Squamous-celled carcinoma of skin*	50
Radiation-induced diseases	10
Heat cataract	70
Decompression sickness	60
Cramp of hand or forearm	40
Beat hand	—
Beat knee	20
Beat elbow	10
Inflamation of tendons of hand or forearm	170
Miner's nystagmus	120
Poisoning by beryllium	20
Carcinoma of nose or air sinuses†	—
Carcinoma of bronchus or lung†	—
Tuberculosis	1,160
Neoplasm of the bladder	180
Poisoning by cadmium	20
Inflamation of upper respiratory tract or mouth due to dust, liquid, vapour	10
Dermatitis	1,320
Farmer's lung	80
Diffuse mesothelioma	120
Nasal cancer in furniture workers	10
Infection by brucella abortus	30
Poisoning by acrylamide monomer	—
Occupational deafness	6,600
Viral hepatitis	—
Effects of vinylchloride monomer (angiosarcoma, osteolysis, non-cirrhotic portal fibrosis)	10
Nasal cancer in boot and shoe workers	—
Occupational vitiligo	—
Occupational asthma	30
Pneumoconiosis	23,420
Byssinosis	2,800

* Due to arsenic, tar, pitch, bitumen, mineral oil, soot, quinone, hydroquinone etc.

† Due to nickel.

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for each of the five-year age bands between 20 years and 95 years, how many people are in receipt of special hardship allowance.

Mr. Newton: In the year ending 30 September 1982 (the latest year for which information is available) the estimated figures are as follows:

Age	Number of recipients
20-24	1,060
25-29	2,350
30-34	3,920
35-39	7,340
40-44	9,030
45-49	12,380
50-54	14,760
55-59	20,600
60-64	23,400
65-69	18,260
70-74	15,640
75-79	9,890
80-84	4,580
85 and over	1,420

Kidney Patients

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services as to kidney transplant programmes in the United Kingdom what are the (i) five-year and (ii) 10-year survival rates of patients after *(a)* first cadaver graft and *(b)* subsequent cadaver grafts.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that information on patient survival following a kidney transplant is not readily available. However, information provided by the United Kingdom transplant service shows that rates for the continuing functioning of a cadaveric kidney transplanted before 1980 are as follows:

	5 year per cent.	10 year per cent.
First transplant	34·5	25·2
Second transplant	28·8	18·9

Indications are that rates have improved significantly since 1980 following the introduction of the immuno-suppressant drug Cyclosporin A. Patients whose transplanted kidney fails are normally then treated by dialysis.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Flannery asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there are any proposals to increase the salaries of speech therapists in line with other graduate professions in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: I understand that no claim has yet been received by the management side of the Whitley council in respect of the 1986-87 pay round. It has, however, undertaken to examine jointly with the staff side the arguments which bear on the question of pay parity with other graduate professions.

Helping the Community to Care Scheme

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Exeter on 30 January, *Official Report*, column *617*, if he will state the dozen elements in the Helping the Community to Care scheme.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 27 January at columns *397-98*.

NHS (Ancillary Workers)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement about the wages of ancillary workers in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) on 28 January at column *496*. The next meeting of the ancillary staffs Whitley council is to be held on 13 March.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of persons claiming *(a)* supplementary pension, *(b)* unemployment benefit and *(c)* all other supplementary benefits in the constituency of Dumbarton for 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The constituency of Dumbarton is covered for social security purposes by the Department's office at Dumbarton. The table shows the number of people receiving supplementary benefit in the categories *(a)* persons over pension age, *(b)* unemployed persons, *(c)* others at November 1979, and at 17 December 1985, the latest available figures.

	Supplementary Pensioners A	Unemployed Persons B	Others C
1979	2,134	1,282	987
1985	1,836	3,555	2,358

The number of persons claiming unemployment benefit in the Dumbarton constituency at 9 June 1983, the earliest available figures, and 12 December 1985 were:

	Number
1983	5,787
1985	5,906

Advisory Committee on Drugs

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to whom and where representations to the Advisory Committee on Drugs should be addressed; how often this committee sits; how it intimates its decisions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Representations to the Advisory Committee on NHS drugs should be addressed to:

The Secretary,
Advisory Committee on NHS Drugs,
Room 620 Eileen House,
80-94 Newington Causeway,
LONDON SE1 6EF

Since July 1985 the advisory committee has met five times and in future expects to meet four times a year. If, in the light of recommendations made to the Secretary of State by the committee, the status of drugs under the selected list scheme needs to be changed, this is effected through regulations laid before Parliament.

Disablement Benefit

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his best estimate for the most recent year for which figures are available of the proportion of awards

of industrial disablement benefit falling into the following ranges: *(a)* one per cent. to 14 per cent., *(b)* 15 per cent. to 19 per cent. and *(c)* 20 per cent. to 100 per cent.

Mr. Newton: In the year ending 20 September 1983 (the latest year for which information is available) the estimated figures are as follows:

Percentage disablement	*Percentage of total awards*
1-14	90·0
15-19	5·6
20-100	4·4

North-West RHA (Membership)

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the current members of the North-West regional health authority, and their dates of retirement giving annual changes in membership since 1974.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cadaver Kidneys

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now introduce legislation to allow hospital authorities to use kidneys of all persons where clinical death has been established other than those who have specifically contracted out from being kidney donors during their lifetime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Government have no plans at present for introducing legislation to amend the Human Tissue Act 1961 in the way that the hon. Member suggests. We are fully committed to increasing the numbers of donor organs becoming available for transplantation, but before supporting the introduction of new arrangements which permitted the removal of organs without the consent of the deceased or, where practicable, of his relatives, we would need to be convinced that such arrangements were broadly accepted both by the medical profession and by the public generally, and that they would in fact result in the supply of donor organs being increased. We would also need to be satisfied that it would be possible to establish adequate safeguards to ensure that the wishes of people opposed to organ donation were properly respected. Organ donation is at present seen as an act of altruistic generosity on the part of donors and their relatives, and the erosion of this view would be regrettable.

Victim Support Schemes

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assistance his Department is providing to victim support schemes.

Mr. Whitney: The Home Department has the predominant central Government interest in victim support schemes. Central Government do not normally provide grants to local voluntary projects but a few grants have been made to local victim support schemes under the DHSS opportunities for volunteering scheme which is designed to enable unemployed people to take part in voluntary activities in the health and personal social services fields. The total paid in 1984-85 was £31,000.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, in the course of examining eligibility of severe weather payments, and the amount paid, cash may be deducted if there are additional heating costs due to illness in the family.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the guidance issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer on 6 December 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Claimants who need extra help with heating costs because they or a member of their household suffer from a long term illness or disability may be eligible for a weekly heating addition of £2·20 or £5·45 a week, depending on the severity of the illness or disability.

Young People (Drinking Patterns)

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys study on the drinking patterns of young people, the field work for which was carried out in 1984; and what is the reason for the delay in making the findings known.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let my right hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Specialist Claims Control

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why specialist claims control officers are visiting Cowdenbeath.

Mr. Major: A specialist claims control team is on a routine visit to Cowdenbeath to assist the local office fraud staff.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which areas of Britain specialist claims control officers are now visiting.

Mr. Major: Specialist claims control teams are currently visiting local offices at:

Basingstoke, Birmingham (Edgbaston), Birmingham (Erdington), Bognor, Bournemouth, Bridgend, Brighton, Cardiff (Central), Chatham, Chester, Coventry (East), Cowdenbeath, Devonport, Doncaster (East), Dundee (East), East Kilbride, Epsom, Eston, Farnworth, Glasgow (Craighton), Guildford, Hendon, Hyde, Manchester (Cheetham), Newcastle (East), Newport (Gwent), Northwich, Nottingham (Castlegate), Peckham, Plaistow, Plymouth, Sheffield (South West), Skelmersdale, Southampton, Stirling, Thanet, Walsall (East), Walsall (West), Walthamstow, Wandsworth, Watford, Weymouth, Winchester, Worksop and Worthing.

Benefit Fraud

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many prosecutions there have been for benefit fraud in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* Britain in 1985.

Mr. Major: In 1984-85, the last full year for which figures are available, prosecutions for benefit fraud totalled 662 in Scotland and 8,436 in Great Britain.

Under-age Girls (Contraception)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many representations he has received from interested professional and voluntary and

charitable organisations since the House of Lords judgment in the Gillick case; and if he will list those which were, respectively, for and against the inclusion in any new guidelines from his Department of a right for parents to be informed in advance if their children are to be issued with contraceptive advice or devices; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many representations he has received following his statement to the House on 12 February concerning the implications for his Department's proposed new guidelines on the issuing of contraceptive advice or devices to children under 16 years of the General Medical Council's revised guidance to doctors on the subject.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since the House of Lords judgment I have received representations from 13 professional, voluntary and religious organisations. Two of these were received since the GMC's decision on its guidelines, and express concern that confidentiality between young people and their doctor should not be breached. Of the others, none raised the specific point referred to by my hon. Friend, but several others expressed concern that my Department's guidelines should not undermine parental responsibility and family stability.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the text of the representations he has received from the ethical committee of the British Medical Association on the proposed guidelines for the issuing of contraceptive advice or devices to children under 16 years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am not aware of any such representations to either my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or myself. I met the chairman of the British Medical Association council and the Secretary of the association on 28 January to discuss the guidance my department will be issuing.

Earnings-related Pensions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will extend the figures given in his reply to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) *Official Report*, 28 January, columns *509-510*, about earnings-related pensions to cover the years 2013, 2018, 2023, 2028, 2033, 2038 and 2043.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is set out in the table. It shows the amount of earnings-related pension a contracted-in single man or woman retiring in April each year with a full contribution record would receive under the scheme proposed in "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) and the Social Security Bill 1986, under assumptions set out in my hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) on 17 December 1985 at columns *147-48*. It should be emphasised that these are highly artificial assumptions, since they are based on the proposition that a pensioner will earn at the same given level throughout a working life of 44 years (men) and 40 years (women). The estimates are based on actual average earnings up to and including 1984-85 and on estimated 1985-86 earnings thereafter. As a result of the method of calculation and of roundings, the amounts shown are slightly lower than those which would actually be paid if any pensioner did fulfil the earnings assumptions.

Amounts of Earnings-related Pension

£ per week

Earnings	*2013*	*2018*	*2023*	*2028*	*2033*	**2038*
Men						
¼ average	2·90	2·85	2·85	2·80	2·70	2·65
½ average	13·40	13·30	13·20	13·05	12·60	12·35
¾ average	23·90	23·70	23·50	23·25	22·55	22·10
Average	34·45	34·10	33·85	33·50	32·45	31·85
1½ average†	49·35	48·90	48·60	48·15	46·85	45·90
2 average						
Women						
¼ average‡	—	—	—	—	—	—
½ average	6·20	6·15	6·05	5·85	5·75	5·75
¾ average	13·15	12·95	12·80	12·40	12·15	12·15
Average	20·00	19·80	19·60	19·00	18·55	18·15
1½ average	33·80	33·50	33·10	32·10	31·40	31·40
2 average	47·55	47·15	46·60	45·20	44·25	44·25

* and later years.
† above upper earnings limit.
‡ below lower earnings limit.

Single Homeless People

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which of the area review teams considering proposals for the replacement of his Department's resettlement units have requested funds for the investigation of local needs and to assist the work of drawing up proposals for housing and related services for single homeless people in their area; and what response has been made to these requests.

Mr. Major: Requests have been received from six area review teams: Leeds; Bradford; Humberside; Plawsworth; Leicester/Northampton; and Southampton. The Department, through its social security regional offices, has made manpower resources available to investigate local needs as part of the review of resettlement provision. Research into housing services for single homeless people is a wider issue; policy on homelessness is a matter for the Department of the Environment which

is currently undertaking a number of research projects concerning the single homeless including a major programme on hostel provision.

General Medical Council (Chairman)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how often he meets the chairman of the General Medical Council; and what subjects are discussed.

Mr. Hayhoe: Very infrequently.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish a revised version of the table in the technical appendix of the social security White Paper on possible rates of benefit, to take account of the average 20 per cent. rates contribution proposed in the Green Paper on local government finance;

(2) whether the rates contribution which he proposes should be paid by supplementary benefit claimants is to be deducted at source in a manner similar to the fuel direct procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: As my right hon. Friend made clear in the debate on Second Reading of the Social Security Bill, the proposed social security structure will have to be developed in the light of discussions on the local government finance Green Paper. It would therefore be premature to consider revising the technical annex illustrative figures in this respect, or to seek to take detailed decisions about administrative arrangements.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish tables comparable to tables P1 to P6 in the technical annex to "Reform of Social Security," Cmnd. 9691, showing pension projections on the assumption that *(a)* the periods of no-earnings specified in paragraph 1.3 of the annex occur at the start of the person's career, followed by the periods of lower and higher earnings, in that order and *(b)* the person's career starts with the period of higher earnings, followed by lower earnings and no earnings, in that order.

Mr. Newton: I regret that to provide illustrations on the lines requested by the hon. Member would involve disproportionate use of computer and manpower resources.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will publish tables comparable to tables P1 to P6 in the technical annex to "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9691, showing pension projections on the assumption that the contracted-out rebate is not boosted by the 2 per cent. incentive addition for the first five years;

(2) whether he will publish tables similar to tables P5 and P6 of the technical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9691, but assuming that the husband died at the age of 64 years.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide statistics for each of the local authority social service departments in England and Wales which indicate *(a)* the percentage of their budget spent on services for mentally ill people, *(b)* the number of day centre places they provide for mentally ill people, and *(c)* the number of approved social workers at present designated as such; how many are envisaged; and if he will make a statement on the present position regarding approved social work.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Psychiatric Service

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many local authority social service departments provide a 24-hour emergency psychiatric service; and if he will list those which do not.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Wrights Vaporising Equipment

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the Wrights vaporising set and Wrights vaporising fluid were withdrawn from prescription under the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Chief Medical Officer's advisory group considered that the clinical need for inhalation therapy would be met by the two inhalations on the selected list of drugs which may be prescribed on the National Health Service:

Benzoin Tincture Compound BP
and Menthol and Eucalyptus Inhalation BP.

The Wrights vaporising set is not suitable for use with these.

Post-operative Infections

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the sample information on post-operative infections held by his Department for 1979 and each year since.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *604*]: The available information is given in the table. Over the period 1979 to 1983, the latest year for which sample information is available centrally, the estimated numbers of in-patient cases undergoing operations increased from 1,901,010 to 2,135,890.

NHS non-psychiatric, non-maternity hospitals

Regional health authorities	*Estimated number of in-patient cases with a diagnosis of post-operative infection*				
	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*
Northern	580	590	610	790	890
Yorkshire	910	1,060	980	1,110	1,150
Trent	1,340	1,430	1,450	1,460	1,800

Regional health authorities	Estimated number of in-patient cases with a diagnosis of post-operative infection				
	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
East Anglian	480	870	610	530	740
North West Thames	570	750	980	1,100	1,050
North East Thames	990	840	1,110	1,230	1,390
South East Thames	870	1,200	1,230	1,290	1,160
South West Thames	900	950	1,130	1,110	910
Wessex	640	720	740	630	700
Oxford	450	450	450	500	460
South Western	1,550	1,960	1,650	1,830	2,090
West Midlands	990	930	1,020	1,150	1,260
Mersey	420	520	950	670	780
North Western	1,570	1,820	1,570	1,760	1,730
RHA Total	12,260	14,090	14,480	15,160	16,310

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Induction Loops

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the total income received from licences for low-powered induction loops for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Butcher: Low powered induction loops are used for a number of different purposes and are licensed on a five-yearly basis. There are currently approximately 9,955 licences on issue covering all types: 438 new licences were issued in 1985 at £12·50 each producing a total income of £5,475. Figures for renewals are not readily available.

Literary and Artistic Works (Convention)

Mr. Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when the Government signed the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.

Mr. Pattie: The Berne convention was signed by the United Kingdom on 9 September 1886.

Audio Tapes

Mr. Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which countries in the European Economic Community have legislation providing for royalties from the sale of blank audio tapes; and which countries are considering legislation.

Mr. Pattie: France, the Federal Republic of Germany and Portugal have legislation providing for royalties from sale of blank audio tapes and I understand that Spain is likely to legislate to this effect during 1986. The question is under active consideration in the Netherlands as well as the United Kingdom.

Mr. Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the best estimate of the percentage of blank audio tapes that are used for illegal copying.

Mr. Pattie: The Government do not compile estimates of illegal copying using blank audio tapes, but in responding to the Green Paper "The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material" (Cmnd. 9445) two organisations have made submissions bearing on the question. One organisation provided survey evident indicating that about 90 per cent. of home recorded audio tapes have music on them. The other organisation said that its research indicated that a "very significant proportion" of home taping was for private purposes which do not infringe copyright.

Mr. Page asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many blank audio tapes were imported into the United Kingdom in 1985; and how many were manufactured in the United Kingdom in 1985.

Mr. Alan Clark: Estimates of United Kingdom manufactured blank audio tapes are not available, as figures would disclose information on individual undertakings. In 1985 (provisional) the United Kingdom imported 95·2 million blank magnetic audio tapes.

HOTOL Project

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any request from British Aerospace or Rolls Royce for funding of development work on the HOTOL project; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The support I recently announced for this project is for proof of concept studies, to see if there would be any insuperable difficulties with the technology and to provide credible design, performance and cost data with which we can explore the concept with our partners in the European Space Agency. Only then and on a thorough technical, financial and market analysis could there be any commitment to developing HOTOL. I am glad that we have been able to accelerate this revolutionary British idea for a spaceplane. The concept and the credit lie with British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce who have themselves funded the work up to now. The British National Space Centre's support will enable us to see what the possibilities are.

Cotton Textiles

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the scale of the reductions in total capacity of the United Kingdom cotton textile industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There are no available statistics on the productive capacity of the cotton textile industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the volume and value of cotton textiles exports in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what has been the volume and value of cotton textile imports in each of the last five years from *(a)* other member countries of the European Economic Community, *(b)* non-European European Economic Community countries and *(c)* the United States of America; and how these figures compare with United Kingdom exports of such products to each of those countries in each of those years.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. *584*]: The information is as follows:

Cotton Textiles—United Kingdom Imports
Cotton Textiles

Quantity—MT (thousands)
Value £ (millions)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985 (January-November)*
EC:					
Quantity	44·5	47·3	59·5	68·2	68·7
Value	154·7	177·1	230·3	284·5	300·9
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	24·9	24·9	28·0	27·6	26·5
Value	64·3	73·7	99·8	107·6	106·9
United States of America:					
Quantity	3·3	1·6	1·3	1·4	1·7
Value	14·3	8·8	8·2	9·0	9·4
All Countries:					
Quantity	128·1	132·0	157·5	166·8	165·2
Value	353·3	392·4	505·7	587·8	610·5

Discontinuous Synthetic or Regenerated Textiles Mixed Mainly or Solely with Cotton

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985 (January-November)*
EC:					
Quantity	10·2	12·2	15·5	19·4	21·9
Value	42·8	57·1	73·1	93·0	106·6
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	1·8	2·5	3·7	3·5	2·4
Value	7·6	10·8	16·9	18·6	15·1
United States of America:					
Quantity	3·5	2·2	1·8	1·3	1·2
Value	14·3	10·5	9·1	7·5	7·3
All Countries:					
Quantity	29·1	31·2	36·6	40·1	40·2
Value	107·3	131·2	157·6	186·1	190·0

Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Group 652, Sub-group 651·3 (Cotton Textiles) and items 651·66, 651·75, 653·41 and 653·81 (Textiles mixed with cotton).

Notes: (i) EC is defined in terms of 1985 membership.
(ii) Imports are valued cif.

Cotton Textiles—United Kingdom Exports
Cotton Textiles

Quantity—MT (thousands)
Value £ (millions)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985 (January-November)*
EC:					
Quantity	12·8	14·4	13·7	16·5	15·6
Value	51·0	54·1	55·0	67·7	72·6
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	3·1	2·3	2·5	2·9	2·9
Value	12·4	10·0	11·0	14·2	16·5
United States of America:					
Quantity	1·1	1·1	1·3	1·0	1·1
Value	9·1	8·4	9·2	9·8	10·9

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985 (January-November)
All Countries:					
Quantity	26·5	26·6	24·6	27·0	26·1
Value	126·9	129·1	127·1	144·9	152·4

Discontinuous Synthetic or Regenerated Textiles Mixed Mainly or Solely with Cotton

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985 (January-November)
EC:					
Quantity	1·6	1·7	2·1	2·5	2·5
Value	7·2	7·4	8·3	11·0	11·8
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	0·5	0·4	0·3	0·4	0·4
Value	2·1	1·8	1·3	1·9	2·6
United States of America:					
Quantity	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·0
Value	0·3	0·1	0·1	0·2	0·3
All Countries:					
Quantity	2·4	2·7	3·0	4·1	3·8
Value	10·9	12·0	12·6	17·5	19·4

Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Group 652, Sub-group 651.3 (Cotton Textiles) and items 651.66, 651.75, 653.41 and 653.81 (Textiles mixed with cotton).

Notes: (i) EC is defined in terms of 1985 membership.
(ii) Imports are valued fob.
(iii) 0·0 Signifies trade of less than 50 MTs.

Textile Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the volume of woollen textiles deliveries and production which was achieved in the United Kingdom during the latest quarter for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with those for the same quarter in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Overall figures for volume of deliveries are unavailable, although some commodity figures are published in Business Monitor PQ 4310, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Figures for production are as follows:

Woollen & Worsted Textiles Production

(not seasonally adjusted)

	Tops & Noils (000 tonnes)	Yarns (000 tonnes)	Fabrics (million square metres)	Blankets (millions square metres)
1976 Q3	26·0	41·9	36·2	5·2
1977 Q3	23·1	40·6	36·0	4·4
1978 Q3	22·6	41·3	35·0	5·0
1979 Q3	19·1	38·8	33·0	4·0
1980 Q3	16·1	29·7	26·9	3·5
1981 Q3	23·0	30·2	22·9	2·2
1982 Q3	15·2	26·4	23·0	2·1
1983 Q3	18·0	27·5	22·0	1·8
1984 Q3	18·5	27·9	20·2	2·0
1985 Q3	20·8	30·1	21·8	2·0

Source: Wool Industry Bureau of Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the volume of woollen textile deliveries and production which was achieved in the United Kingdom during the latest year for which figures are available; and how these figures compare with those for the last 10 years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Overall figures for volume of deliveries are unavailable, although some commodity figures are published in Business Monitor PQ 4310, copies of which are in the House of Commons Library. Figures for production are as follows:

Woollens & Worsted Textiles Production

	Tops & Noils (000 tonnes)	*Yarns (000 tonnes)*	*Fabrics (million square metres)*	*Blankets (million square metres)*
1976	111·6	188·8	143·1	22·8
1977	105·1	186·9	150·1	22·2
1978	98·2	183·2	144·1	22·0
1979	84·2	174·3	137·8	18·2
1980	70·2	141·0	118·3	15·0
1981	74·4	130·9	96·7	9·9
1982	70·3	114·9	100·3	9·4
1983	74·1	121·2	94·0	8·3
1984	80·1	126·6	90·7	9·3

Source: Wool Industry Bureau of Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the scale of the reductions in total capacity of the United Kingdom woollen textile industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: There are no available statistics on the productive capacity of the woollen textile industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the volume and value of woollen textile exports in each of the last five years for which figures are available;

(2) what has been the volume and value of woollen textile imports in each of the last five years from *(a)* other member countries of the EEC, *(b)* non EEC European countries and *(c)* the United States of America; and how these figures compare with United Kingdom exports of such products to each of those countries in each of those years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is as follows:

Woollen textiles—United Kingdom Exports

Quantity—MT (thousands)
Value —£ (millions)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985**
Woollen Textiles					
European Community:					
Quantity	20·4	17·3	19·4	20·9	19·1
Value	119·7	108·4	119·6	144·3	147·2
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	6·7	5·3	5·7	5·1	4·8
Value	31·1	26·4	30·0	30·1	32·3
United States of America:					
Quantity	1·9	1·8	2·3	3·3	3·3
Value	18·8	19·9	25·2	40·2	42·1
All countries:					
Quantity	43·6	39·6	43·1	47·2	44·3
Value	294·0	287·1	308·7	379·0	389·5
Discontinuous synthetic or regenerated textiles mixed mainly or solely with wool					
European Community:					
Quantity	0·9	0·8	0·8	0·7	0·7
Value	3·9	3·9	3·6	3·4	3·4
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	0·4	0·4	0·3	0·4	0·3
Value	1·3	1·8	1·5	1·8	1·7
United States of America:					
Quantity	0	0	0	0·1	0·1
Value	0	0·1	0·1	0·7	0·7
All countries:					
Quantity	2·1	2·1	2·1	2·1	2·3
Value	12·4	14·3	13·2	14·6	17·3

* January to November.
Source:
Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Sub-group 268.7 (part), 651.2 (less 651.25) 654.2, 654.3, and 657.1 (part) and items 657.73 (part) and 658.31 [woollen textiles] and items 651.67, 651.76, 653.42 and 653.82 (fibres mixed mainly or wholly with wool or fine animal hair).
Notes:
(i) European Community is defined in terms of 1985 membership.
(ii) Imports are valued cif.
(iii) O signifies trade under 50 MT's.

Woollen textiles—United Kingdom Imports
Quantity—MT (thousands)
Value —£ (millions)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985**
European Community:					
Quantity	16·5	17·9	21·5	22·9	20·1
Value	67·4	81·5	104·5	131·5	135·7
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	1·2	1·7	2·3	2·8	2·2
Value	6·4	9·8	13·8	17·1	17·6
United States of America:					
Quantity	0·1	0·3	0·3	0	0·4
Value	0·7	1·2	1·0	0·6	2·0
All countries:					
Quantity	23·4	24·6	29·6	32·1	26·6
Value	95·3	111·8	141·9	180·2	179·7
Discontinuous synthetic or regenerated textiles mixed mainly or solely with wool					
European Community:					
Quantity	9·6	10·5	15·2	14·8	11·6
Value	38·6	43·8	64·6	71·2	66·5
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	0·6	0·4	0·7	1·1	1·1
Value	3·0	2·8	4·8	6·9	7·9
United States of America:					
Quantity	0·1	0	0	0	0
Value	0·5	0·1	0·2	0·2	0·3
All countries:					
Quantity	10·6	11·2	16·5	16·6	13·4
Value	43·0	48·7	72·9	82·6	78·4

* January to November.
Source:
Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Sb-group 268.7 (part), 651.2 (less 651.25) 654.2, 654.3, and 657.1 (part) and items 657.73 (part) and 658.31 [woollen textiles] and items 651.67, 651.76, 653.42 and 653.82 (fibres mixed mainly or wholly with wool or fine animal hair).
Notes:
(i) European Community is defined in terms of 1985 membership.
(ii) Imports are valued cif.
(iii) O signifies trade under 50 MT's.

Electricity (Resale)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to introduce legislation relating to the control of the resale price of electricity to tenants by private landlords; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: As indicated in my answer of 5 December 1985 to my hon. Friend the Member for York, (Mr. Gregory), the Government propose to deal with the question of overcharging for resale of electricity as part of the proposed new legislation on price indications. We intend to introduce this legislation as soon as parliamentary time is available.

Under present legislation the electricity supply industry fixes the maximum resale price. We have no plans to change that situation.

COCOM

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what estimates have been made of the costs to British industry of compliance with consultative committee export restriction regulations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on the effects on future United Kingdom trade prospects of existing COCOM regulations.

Mr. Alan Clark: It is not practicable to estimate the cost to industry and effect on trade prospects of strategic export controls. The Government seek to keep such consequences to the minimum by working with COCOM partners to ensure that only goods which are strategically sensitive are subject to such controls.

US Export Administration Act

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what have been the effects of the latest United States Export Administration Act on British exports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The Export Administration Amendment Act 1985 maintains the United States claim to jurisdiction over exports from the United Kingdom of certain United States origin goods and technology or goods incorporating United States components. This can have the effect of delaying or preventing exports that are legal under United Kingdom law. The Government's policy is normally to allow firms to make their own commercial judgment about whether to comply with the United States regulations. But the Government have made it clear on many occasions that they do not accept the United States claims to extraterritorial jurisdiction and regard them as an infringement of United Kingdom sovereignty.

US (Scientific Material)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) that representations he has made to the United States of America concerning its unwillingness to release scientific material for military or strategic reasons; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has as to the incidence of United Kingdom citizens being prevented from participating or attending scientific discussions in the United States of America for military or strategic reasons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I am aware of about 10 scientific conferences over the last three years which have been restricted to United States citizens. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Industry and Information Technology made representations about this when he visited the United States last year. The issue has also been raised with the United States Government by officials on a number of occasions.

Regional Aid

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in what form fresh guidance has been issued with regard to grant allocation under regional aid with a view to ensuring that real job creation will result.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Details of the Government's revised regional policy, which aims to reduce regional disparities in employment opportunities on a stable long term basis, were announced on 28 November 1984 by the then Minister of State for Industry. Industry is made aware of the incentives available under it. Through my Department's regional offices as well as through departmental publications which were simplified last year and are freely available.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been paid out so far in the financial year in *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* selective financial assistance; and if he will publish a table which compares actual expenditure with his original estimate of likely expenditure.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Protectionism

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to resist any increase in protectionism in the free world; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: The United Kingdom, in company with all other OECD countries, stands pledged both to resist pressures for further protectionism and to pursue possibilities for the progressive liberalisation of trade. With our community partners, we are currently embarked on a relaxation of our external trade regimes in many sectors, notably steel and textiles. The launch in September of a new round of trade negotiations under the aegis of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade will offer further scope to strengthen the open multilateral trading system.

Tractor Imports

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give a breakdown of tractor imports by country of origin over the past 10 years and year by year into the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: The detail of information requested is not available by country of origin without incurring disproportionate cost. The table shows a breakdown of tractor imports from the five major countries over the years 1976 to 1985 on a country of consignment basis.

United Kingdom imports by country of consignment 1976 to 1985

Value £ million

	1976	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
All countries:	91·1	175·0	185·9	222·6	167·7	119·2	238·6	269·3	292·1	322·9
of which:										
Federal Republic of Germany	22·3	47·8	37·2	53·4	37·2	30·4	61·2	72·8	81·4	99·4
Sweden	24·4	44·2	61·6	62·5	40·9	14·7	37·5	51·0	65·4	80·0
France	7·3	23·8	27·0	32·8	24·3	16·9	42·3	57·3	46·5	52·8

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985
Netherlands	11·4	24·7	24·0	33·1	26·4	21·3	36·7	31·1	42·3	36·3
Italy	5·0	14·9	13·5	13·5	13·8	7·4	15·6	21·0	23·6	24·3
Others	20·8	19·7	22·5	27·2	25·0	28·5	45·4	36·1	32·9	30·1

* January to November.
Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 sub groups 722·3, 722·4 and 783·2 and equivalent headings from SITC/R.
Note: Imports are valued cif.

Distillers (Takeover Bids)

Mr. Ryman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive the report of the Director General of Fair Tradig on the revised bid by Argyll for Distillers.

Mr. Howard: I understand that the Office of Fair Trading considers that the increased offer for the Distillers Co. by the Argyll Group does not materially alter the circumstances on which my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made his decisions, announced on 9 January, not to refer the merger proposal to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Ryman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to receive the Director General of Fair Trading's report on the proposed takeover by Guinness of Distillers.

Mr. Howard: The director general's advice was not sent to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I and my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Information Technology received his advice on the proposed takeover of Distillers on 12 February. My hon. Friend announced on 14 February that he had decided to refer the proposed acquisition by Guinness plc of Distillers to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation. A copy of the Department's notice announcing that decision is available in the Library of the House.

Imperial Group

Mr. Ryman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what reasons he decided to refuse to refer the bid by Hanson Trust for Imperial Tobacco to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry considered that the proposal raised no competition or other public interest issues which would mreit a reference.

Mr. Ryman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry for what reason he referred the bid by Imperial Tobacco for United Biscuits to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: The reference was made because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for trade and Industry considered that the proposal raised sufficiently serious questions about its impact on competition as to deserve further investigation by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Ryman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what account he took, when deciding whether to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the bids for Imperial Tobacco by the Hanson Trust and for United Biscuits by Imperial Tobacco respectively, of the implications of his decision in each case for his decision in the other; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In making each decision, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State took account of the existence of the other bid.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many representations he has received seeking reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of Hanson Trust's takeover bid for the Imperial Group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have received 25 written representations in favour of such a reference. The decision not to refer took full account of these representations.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will state what effect he estimates the building of the Channel tunnel will have upon orders of steel from the British Steel Corporation; and which plants will benefit.

Mr. Peter Morrison: A considerable quantity of iron and steel will be needed, including reinforcing steel and structural steel sections, steel rails and railway equipment and cast-iron tunnel linings. Until tenders have been accepted on the appropriate contracts it will not be possible to say what share of the steel required will be supplied by BSC.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what was the nature of the information given by an official in his Department to the office of the chairman of Westland plc on the afternoon of 6 January and referred to by the Prime Minister on 23 January, *Official Report*, column 450 and 27 January, *Official Report*, column 653;

(2) what were the practical difficulties which militated against the reading of the whole text of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence over the telephone to the Press Association on 6 January.

Mr. Channon: I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her statement on 23 January and in the debate on 27 January.

Sub-post Offices

Mr. St. John-Stevas asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, when he next meets the chairman of the Post Office, he will discuss with him the feasibility of reopening recently closed sub-post offices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: No. Decisions about opening or closing individual post offices are an operational matter for the Post Office Board.

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (Shipment)

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to prevent the importation of 15 tonnes of polychlorinated biphenyls from Australia, for processing at the Re-Chem company at Pontypool.

Mr. Alan Clark: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Engagements

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the Secretary of State's engagements for the afternoon of 13 December, stating on which date each engagement was arranged.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1986, c. *253*]: My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) held several meetings at the Department before leaving for his constituency.

Men's Suits (Romania)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations his Department has made to the European Commission in relation to men's suits imported from Romania; and what action it proposed.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c. *519*]: We have drawn the attention of the European Commission to the prices at which Romanian suits have been entering the United Kingdom and have asked it to make representations to the Romanians. Further details are required on the effects on the market and we are in close consultation with our industry about this.

Man-made Fibres

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning the scale of the reductions in total capacity of the United Kingdom man-made fibre industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. 583]: There are no available statistics on the productive capacity of the man-made fibre industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the volume and value of man-made fibre imports in each of the last five years from *(a)* other member countries of the European Economic Community, *(b)* non-European Economic Community European countries and *(c)* the United States of America; and how these figures compare with United Kingdom exports of such products to each of those countries in each of those years;

(2) what has been the volume and value of man-made fibre exports in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. 582]: The information is as follows:

Imports of man-made fibres
Quantity—MT (thousands) Value—£ (millions)

a)	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
European Community:					
Quantity	152	153	182	183	181
Value	207	241	292	318	329
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	48	48	47	44	43
Value	58	64	67	69	71
United States of America:					
Quantity	12	11	7	7	8
Value	19	20	13	17	16
All countries:					
Quantity	222	228	255	252	251
Value	230	345	401	433	449

* January—November

Exports of man-made fibres

b)	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	**1985*
European Community:					
Quantity	115	100	115	126	117
Value	142	140	170	200	217
Rest of Western Europe:					
Quantity	41	33	36	38	36
Value	51	51	55	62	64
United States of America:					
Quantity	3	3	11	15	14
Value	4	4	17	29	27

b)	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985
All countries:					
Quantity	292	245	297	288	243
Value	334	326	400	446	432

Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Group 267 (less 267.21 (part)), Sub-groups 266.5, 266.6, 266.7 & 651.4 (less 651.48) and Items 651.71, 651.72, 651.73 & 651.78, in the United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics.

Notes:

(i) EC is defined in terms of 1985 membership.

(ii) Imports are valued cif, exports are valued fob.

* January—November

TRANSPORT

Aviation Safety

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what research has been conducted into aviation safety by the Civil Aviation Authority in the last 12 months.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority conducts safety related research in five main areas. These are the evaluation of the incidence, severity and cause of accidents; collision avoidance; airworthiness of aircraft and equipment; adverse environmental factors; and human factors affecting aircrew. A research programme is agreed annually with representatives of a number of interests including manufacturers of aircraft and equipment and operators of aircraft and aerodromes. The programme for the last 12 months covered aspects of all the five main research areas.

Rail Services

Mr. Leadbitter asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the effect on rail services of the public service obligation grant; and if he will give the level of this grant for each year since 1980 to the latest year for which information is available.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received about six letters on this matter in the past two years. Central Government PSO grant paid to-BR in each year since 1980 was as follows:

£ million outturn prices

	£ million
1980	576
1981	749
1982	817
1983	856
*1984-85	1,069
†1985-86	813

* Fifteen months to end March 1985.

† Agreed claim for 12 months fiscal year; final payments subject to adjustment.

School Vehicles (Checks)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about which county councils in England and Wales have introduced their own system of random school vehicle checks.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. This is a matter for the county councils themselves.

Public Service Vehicles (Tests)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* by operator group for 1984-85, separately distinguishing between Great Britain and Wales, the number and percentage of tests which resulted in immediate prohibition of annual public service vehicle tests.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows. The annual test records do not distinguish between immediate and delayed prohibitions.

1984-85 Public Service Vehicles Issue of Prohibition Notices at Statutory Annual Tests

Operator	Total Number of Tests	Total Prohibitions issued	per cent
Great Britain			
NBC	13,340	35	0·26
PTE	8,740	39	0·45
Local Authority	4,789	2	0·04
SBG	3,010	5	0·17
Private	26,773	274	1·02
LTE	4,636	42	0·91
	61,288	397	
Wales			
NBC	1,271	1	0·08
Local Authority	511	1	0·20
Private	2,666	25	0·94
	4,448	27	

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* for 1984-85, separately distinguishing between Great Britain and Wales, the results of spot checking of public service vehicles and the immediate prohibition rates.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Separate information on spot checks is not readily available for Wales as a whole. The information for Great Britain and the south Wales traffic area is as follows:

1984-85

	Great Britain	South Wales Traffic Area
Number of spot checks on PSVs	15,947	965
	*22	*32
Immediate prohibitions	730	18
	†4·6	†1·9

* Percentage of vehicles subject to annual test.

† Percentage of vehicles spot-checked.

Vehicle Examiners

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* for the

South Wales traffic area, for each year since 1979, the number of vehicle examiners employed by his Department, together with the number of public service vehicles and goods vehicles for which they are responsible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

South Wales Traffic Area

	1980-81	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Vehicle examiner staff in post	19	19	17	17	17	20
Public service vehicles	n.a.	n.a.	3,606	3,541	3,014	n.a.
Heavy goods vehicles	28,215	27,098	26,604	26,458	26,528	n.a.

Figures for 1979 are not readily available.

Vehicle numbers are not readily available by traffic area, so the data have been extracted from the annual testing statistics and do not therefore include vehicles under one year old. Public service vehicle annual testing statistics are available only from 1982-83 onwards. Figures for HGVs and PSVs for 1985-86 are not yet available.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979, the number of public service vehicle examiners engaged in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain, on inspecting operators' premises;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of public service vehicle examiners engaged in spot checks in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain, for each year since 1979;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979, the number of public service vehicle examiners in each traffic area in Great Britain;

(4) if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each year since 1979 the number of public service vehicle examiners engaged in *(a)* Wales and *(b)* Great Britain on annual tests at vehicle testing stations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The vehicle examiner staff in post figures for the years 1980-85 by traffic area are as follows:

Vehicle examiner staff in post

Traffic area	*May 1980*	*May 1981*	*May 1982*	*May 1983*	*May 1984*	*May 1985*
Northern	22	20	21	20	20	22
Yorkshire	32	29	28	28	26	33
North Western	43	41	39	36	30	46
West Midlands	34	34	33	29	29	34
East Midlands	31	28	29	29	29	35
Eastern	22	22	22	19	19	25
South Wales	19	19	17	17	17	20
Western	29	28	28	27	30	29
South Eastern	33	32	31	30	29	30
Metropolitan	37	34	35	39	44	54
Scottish	39	37	35	34	33	40
Total	341	324	318	308	316	368

Figures are not readily available for 1979, nor are separate figures for the whole of Wales. Each vehicle examiner is responsible for a range of duties including inspecting operators premises, spot checks and annual testing; the figures for man years spent on vehicle examiners' activities are not readily available for previous years and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. For 1984-85 the breakdown of vehicle examiner effort on PSV work is as follows:

Great Britain

	Vehicle examiner man years
Inspection of PSV operators' premises including PSVs checked during visits	11
PSV enforcement work including unannounced spot checks and clearance of prohibitions	16
PSV annual test and retests	67

In addition to the vehicle mechanical condition inspections conducted by public service vehicle examiners, traffic examiners based in the traffic areas have the duty to ensure that PSVs are correctly licensed and drivers comply in all respects with legislation covering drivers' hours.

Chemicals (Conveyance)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if benzene hexachloride has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles;

(2) if benzyl benzoate has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These substances are not normally regarded as dangerous in transport, and vehicles carrying them are not required to display hazard warning panels.

British Rail (Grants)

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport what account he takes, in setting the public service obligation grant to British Rail, of the additional costs arising to the Board from maintaining operation of passenger services during icy and snowy weather.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Board's claim for PSO grant is based on its estimate of the amount by which the costs of operating the passenger railway will exceed its receipts. These costs include any estimate of the effects of bad weather on the railway, but grant is not paid for specific services or areas of expenditure. It is for the board to decide expenditure priorities within the resources available to it.

News International (Rail Freight)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the impact on British Rail's financial position of the transfer of News International business from rail to road, and the outcome of discussions on this matter between British Rail and that organisation.

Mr. David Mitchell: No. This is entirely a commercial matter for British Rail and News International.

British Transport Police

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in view of the additional resources to be made available to improve the strength of the civil police, he has any plans to provide further funding for the British transport police.

Mr. David Mitchell: Responsibility for financing the British transport police rests with the British Railways Board, London Regional Transport and others who use their services. Those costs which fall to BR's passenger sector and to LRT are eligible expenditure in the determination of the amount of grant aid to those bodies. I shall continue to consider all relevant factors affecting BR's and LRT's costs when determining the grant settlements, including the financing of BTP.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has received from members of the public stating their opposition to the Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: Since the announcement by the Government of their decision on 20 January 1986, 230 letters have been received from members of the public opposed to the Channel tunnel.

Tachograph

Mr. Woodcock asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications of recent amendments to EEC 543/9 and 1463/70 for the requirement for vehicles used for retail coal deliveries within a 50km radius of the place where the vehicle is based to be fitted with tachographs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Under the new EC regulations a vehicle operating within 50km of its base may be exempted from the requirement to fit a tachograph in certain circumstances. A consultation document will shortly be issued on this and other matters relating to the new regulations.

Drink-driving Offences

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the total number of drivers involved in accidents in England and Wales with positive breath tests or failure to provide a specimen from 1976 to 1984, inclusive, and the total number of drivers involved in accidents with positive breath tests or failure to provide a specimen during the following periods—04.00 hours to 10.00 hours, 10.00 hours to 16.00 hours, 16.00 hours to 22.00 hours and 22.00 hours to 04.00 hours, respectively, from 1976 to 1984, inclusive, or for such periods for which statistics are available.

Mr. Ridley: The most readily available information is for Great Britain and is contained in tables 10 and 35 of "Road Accidents Great Britain 1984", a copy of which is in the Library. A summary is as follows:

Number of drivers in personal injury accidents who gave a positive breath test or who failed or refused to provide a sample: Great Britain: 1979-1984

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Hour						
04.00-10.00	444	379	350	387	294	344
10.00-16.00	1,512	1,448	1,239	1,345	1,237	1,253
16.00-22.00	3,430	3,314	3,172	3,539	3,304	3,446
22.00-04.00	8,694	8,279	7,537	8,223	7,596	7,513
Total	14,080	13,420	12,298	13,494	12,431	12,556

Okehampton Bypass

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the subsequent confirming Act, he will now reimburse the objectors to the Okehampton bypass Special Procedure Order who petitioned against the order in Parliament the costs they incurred in so doing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Section 7 of the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945 gives the Joint Committee, which hears the petitions, power to award costs. In this case, I understand the Committee was not asked to exercise the power.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 18 February 1986

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Social Security (Appeals)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Attorney-General whether he will bring forward proposals concerning applications to the social security commissioners for leave to appeal to the commissioners in order to *(a)* require the commissioners to give reasons for a decision to refuse such leave and *(b)* giving a direct right of appeal to the Court of Appeal against such a refusal of leave; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I have no such plans at present.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Attorney-General what specific actions have been taken by the Lord Chancellor's Department to reduce the delays in disposing of appeals to the social security commissioners *(a)* in supplementary benefit cases and *(b)* in other cases, since that Department assumed responsibility for the commissioners on 1 January 1985.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor's Department has undertaken a detailed review of the procedures and working methods in all types of cases which come before the social security commissioners and a number of measures designed to contain delays have been taken. These include improved listing procedures and typing facilities and revised arrangements for handling applications for leave to appeal. Other measures are under consideration, and the current Social Security Bill contains provisions designed to secure a number of procedural improvements.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Radio Interference (Pinner)

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps are being taken to deal with interference from amateur radio transmissions suffered by the residents of Tudor Close, Eastcote, near Pinner, Middlesex; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Problems can arise when high power radio transmissions are made in close proximity to radio and television sets, or indeed a range of electrical apparatus not designed to receive radio. Such problems can be exacerbated by equipment which is deficient in its ability to reject unwanted signals or in the case of radios and televisions which have an inadequate or defective aerial or no aerial at all. The problem is growing because more and more homes now contain a great range of electric equipment; and high power transmitting equipment is now more widely available to the growing number of amateur radio licensees.

Radio amateurs generally take a responsible attitude to the problems their transmissions cause. Equally, manufacturers are keen to produce equipment which has adequate immunity. Regrettably, a few amateurs and manufacturers do not have such a responsible attitude; it is they who cause problems.

My officials are currently discussing with the British Radio and Electronic Equipment Manufacturers Association and the Radio Society of Great Britain the implications for them of the new standard for television immunity currently under discussion internationally and procedures for dealing with individual cases where interference is caused. I would like to see sensible immunity standards observed by all manufacturers and importers of radio receiving and radio sensitive equipment. Where possible and appropriate these will be enforced by order. Similarly, manufacturers and importers of radio and non-radio equipment should seek to ensure that their products do not cause interference to radio users. Orders exist for some types of equipment and where appropriate others will be made.

Where it proves impossible to resolve individual problems and the affected apparatus has been brought up to a reasonable level of immunity, I intend to vary the terms under which the relevant amateurs are licensed; where necessary (and I hope it will not be necessary often) licences will be revoked.

In the particular case referred to by my hon. Friend, I will vary the powers which the amateur is licensed to use and restrict his use of certain bands. If this does not resolve the problem, I shall further review the position.

Textile and Clothing Industries

122. **Mr. Merlyn Rees** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were employed in the textile and clothing industries in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The number of people employed in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries was 500,400 in June 1983, 490,500 in June 1984 and 483,300 in June 1985.

123. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what assessments he has made of the impact of the multi-fibre arrangement on employment in the textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Alan Clark: A number of studies have attempted to assess the employment consequences of the MFA. These I look at with interest and attention.

Grants (Faversham)

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a list of all Government investment grants and European Economic Community grants or loans to industry in the Faversham constituency since 1979, under the Industry Act or other legislation, indicating the amounts involved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Under my Department's main schemes of assistance, five grants worth a total of £2,062,000 have been offered to companies in the Faversham constituency since the beginning of 1979. The names of the companies concerned cannot be disclosed owing to the normal rules of commercial confidentiality. No EEC grants are available in the area.

Pharmaceutical Companies (Investment)

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish a table showing the level of investment in the United Kingdom made by foreign-based pharmaceutical companies in each year of the last five years, to the latest available date.

Mr. Butcher: Information on the level of inward direct investment is available only from the triennial census of overseas assets and liabilities. The latest available data related to the end of 1981 and showed investment of £868 million. Levels of direct investment at the end of 1984 will not be available until the end of 1986.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. James Lamond asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the employment consequences of the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I have received representations from a wide range of interested parties in industry, trade unions and retail and consumer interests on, inter alia, the employment effects of the MFA.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give figures for *(a)* Stoke on Trent, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* the United Kingdom showing the percentage change between 1979 and the most recent year for which figures are available for (i) manufacturing output and (ii) investment in manufacturing industry; and if he will list the steps he has taken in the last 12 months to improve the figures.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Burroughs Machines

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government assistance has been given to Burroughs Machines by way of regional selective assistance and regional development grant in each year from 1979 *(a)* in total, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Westland plc

Mr. Sedgemore asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will use his powers under the Companies Act 1985 to ascertain who were the beneficial owners of shares held in nominees' names in Westland plc at the time when the decision was taken to accept the Sikorsky proposals.

Mr. Howard: Westland has itself issued notices under section 212 of the Companies Act requiring disclosure of information about the beneficial ownership of the shares in question. In the present circumstances, action by the Secretary of State is unnecessary.

Regional Aid

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much money has been paid out so far in the financial year in *(a)* regional development grant and *(b)* selective financial assistance; and if he will publish a table which compares actual expenditure with his original estimate of likely expenditure.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986]: Expenditure on regional development grants (RDG) and regional selective assistance (RSA) in England for the period 1 April—31 December 1985 (the latest period available) is as follows:

£'000

Regional Development Grant Expenditure	Gross payments	Refunds	Net payments
	97,587	3,157	94,430*
Regional Development Grant Supply Estimate	Gross Provision	Appropriations in Aid	Net provision
	188,050	10,000	178,050
Regional Selective Assistance Expenditure	Gross payments	Refunds	Net payments
	41,000	—	41,000†
Regional Selective Assistance Supply Estimate	Gross Provision	Appropriations in Aid	Net provision
	61,599	—	61,599‡

* A further £65 million had been approved for payment by 31 December 1985 but was subject to the four-month moratorium on payments of old-style regional development grants announced on 17 January 1985. This sum will be paid between 1 January and 1 May 1986.
† This figure relates only to expenditure under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, that is expenditure on project grants, interest relief grants, office and services grants, and training grants.
‡ The published Estimate for regional selective assistance was £83,601,000 gross and £68,552,000 net (with £15,049,000 for Appropriations in Aid) but these figures include miscellaneous items such as European Investment Bank contingent liability, exchange risk guarantee scheme, small and medium-sized units and export assistance not related to expenditure under section 7 of the Industrial Development Act 1982.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farmers (Bad Weather Assistance)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Government's scheme of assistance to farmers who suffered exceptional hardship as a result of the bad weather in the summer of 1985.

Mr. Jopling: To date, payments made to farmers in England under the exceptional Weather aid scheme amount to some £3·24 million. The few remaining claims are now being processed and we expect total payments to

amount to about £3·3 million, slightly lower than the original estimate of £3·4 million. It appears that virtually all eligible livestock farmers — about 9,600 in all — submitted applications.

As I announced on 3 December, we have adopted special procedures to pay advances (at the rate of 75 per cent.) to farmers eligible for hill livestock compensatory allowances. Under these, we have by today paid out some £13·3 million to 7,800 applicants in England. The remaining claimants should receive their advances very shortly after submitting their applications. In addition, payment of advances of sheep annual premium to producers in the less-favoured areas of England has been virtually completed: to date, some £6·4 million has been paid to 11,370 applicants.

These special measures will have been of substantial benefit to producers facing cash flow problems as a result of last year's bad weather.

PRIME MINISTER

Royal College of Nursing

Q47. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Prime Minister when she last met the general secretary of the Royal College of Nursing.

The Prime Minister In January 1985, when I attended the annual dinner of the Royal College of Nursing.

Arms Control

Q60. **Mr. Latham** asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on the latest consultations with, and information which she has had from, President Reagan's Administration regarding the arms control negotiations in Geneva.

The Prime Minister: We remain in close and regular touch with the United States Administration on the arms control negotiations in Geneva. The most recent consultations took place at the North Atlantic Council meeting on 3 February when the three United States negotiators briefed the council on the present state of the negotiations. Ambassador Paul Nitze, special adviser on arms control to Secretary of State Shultz, called on me on 5 February, when we discussed the latest Gorbachev proposals and the Geneva negotiations.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Q62. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister what steps she proposes to take to seek to increase public support for the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I recognise that there are still misunderstandings within Northern Ireland about both the terms and operation of the Anglo-Irish agreement. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and I will, therefore, continue to explain why fears are unjustified and to draw attention to the advantages the agreement offers to all sections of the community in Northern Ireland. I am soon to meet the leaders of the two main Unionist parties, the Speaker of the Assembly, and representatives from the Church of Ireland. I also hope to meet the leaders of the SDLP and alliance parties.

Sir Robert Armstrong

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister on what date Sir Robert Armstrong was originally scheduled to return from his visit to Honolulu in connection with preparations for the economic summit; why he returned to the United Kingdom before this date; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: In his capacity as my personal representative for the purposes of preparing the 1986 economic summit, Sir Robert Armstrong attended a meeting of Personal Representatives held in Honolulu from Friday 31 January until Sunday 2 February. He planned to stop over in Washington for two days on his way back, but returned to this country direct in order to be available in case he was invited to appear before the Select Committee on Defence, as in the event he was.

British Leyland

Q83. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Prime Minister is she will pay an official visit to a British Leyland factory.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Turkey

Q133. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Prime Minister if she will place on the agenda for the discussions with the Prime Minister of Turkey from 17 to 19 February the subject of torture and human rights in Turkey.

The Prime Minister: I look forward to holding wide-ranging talks with Mr. Ozal later today. I shall welcome the progress made by his Government on human rights and, as on previous occasions, express our hope that Turkey will continue its efforts to achieve full normalisation on these matters.

Warship Tenders

Mr. Sayeed asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government that, when tenders for warships are considered, total Government expenditure including both procurement costs and industrial assistance are taken into account and that the option offering the lowest net figures should be accepted.

The Prime Minister: It is the Government's policy that, save in exceptional circumstances, warship orders should be awarded to the tender which offers best value for the defence budget. At the same time, where warship builders are publicly owned, the Government's policy is that tenders for defence work should be on an unsubsidised basis.

Museums (Sponsorship)

Mr. Faulds asked the Prime Minister whether she will take steps to transfer the sponsorship of the Natural History museum and the Geological museum from the Department of Education and Science to the Office of Arts and Libraries; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Workplace Visits

Mr. Woodall asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official visits to factories and other workplaces which were planned since 1979, but subsequently cancelled, providing details of such visits, sites, names of employers, and the reasons for cancellation.

The Prime Minister: No.

Mr. Woodall asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official visits to factories and other workplaces since 1979, providing details of dates of visits, sites and names of employers.

The Prime Minister: The information is as follows:

Date	*Site*	*Name of Employer*
6 July 1979	Cambridge	HH Electronics and Laser Scan Ltd.
11 July 1979	Edinburgh	Ethicon Ltd.
13 July 1979	Taywood Road	Taylor Woodrow Research Laboratory
31 August 1979	Skelmersdale	Ward and Goldstone (Raydex International) Ltd.
	Atherton	Carrington Viyella
	Pendlebury	Rigby Electronics
	Dounreay	Atomic Energy Authority
7 September 1979	Tullos	Shell
		John Wood Group
14 September 1979	North Tawton	Express Creameries
	Barnstaple	Shapland and Petter Ltd.
15 February 1980	Wilton	Wilton Carpet Factory
	Devizes	Archie Kidd Ltd.
	Calne	Calne Electronics Ltd.
14 March 1980	Selby	NCB
	Howden Dyke, Humberside	Howden Glucose Factory
	Hull	Smith and Nephew
18 April 1980	Basingstoke	Posidata Ltd.
	Basingstoke	Lansing Bagnall Ltd.
	London	Logica Ltd.
23 May 1980	Pallion West Industrial Estate	Arthur Pawson
		Carpenters (Glaziers) Ltd.
		Hilton Press
		Myervale Ltd.
		M. G. Tate
		P. B. Upholsteries
		Geoffrey Maskall Engineering Ltd.
		Jebson Cabinet Makers
23 May 1980	Wearside	Austin and Pickersgill
	Cramlington	British Gas Corporation
6 June 1980	Castner Kellner Works Runcorn	ICI
	Stoke on Trent	Royal Doulton
27 June 1980	Bitteswell	British Aerospace Aircraft Group
	Northampton	Heygates Flour Mill
4 July 1980	Forties Field	British Petroleum
18 July 1980	Holyhead	Anglesey Aluminium
	Holyhead	CMT Wells Co. Ltd.
5 September 1980	Flotta, Orkney	Occidental Oil Company
11 September 1980	Harwell	Atomic Energy Research Establishment
12 December 1980	Hereford	Bulmers
6 March 1981	Belfast	Hughes Tool Co.
		Belfast Tool & Gauge Co.
10 April 1981	Neston	GEC
4 June 1981	Warminster	Airfoil Development Company
5 June 1981	Bristol	Electrolocation Ltd.
	Bristol	Stachan & Henshaw Engineering
10 July 1981	Hanger Lane, London	GB Computer Centre
5 August 1981	Norwich	Norplan Ltd.
	Watlington	Mill Farm
3 September 1981	Glasgow	Howdens
		Falmers Jeans
20 November 1981	Sharnbrook, Bedford	Unilever Biotechnology Research Laboratory
	Bedford	Texas Instruments
11 December 1981	Harlescott, Shrewsbury	Bibby's Feed Mill
	Allscott	British Sugar Corporation
	Telford	Glynwed
15 January 1982	Salford	Science Park Hiltcroft Precision Instrumentation Ltd.
	Trafford Park, Manchester	Kellogs Ltd.
12 February 1982	Lincoln	Ruston Gas Turbines
	Gainsborough	Worley Wallcoverings Ltd.
12 March 1982	Gateshead	NEI Power Engineering Ltd.
	Sunderland	Southwick Shipyard
2 July 1982	Newtown	Tootal Menswear
	Cwn Whitton	Cwn Whitton Farm
16 July 1982	Wimborne	Flight Refuelling Ltd.
		Marden Edwards & Co.
2 September 1982	Forfar	Don Brothers, Buist & Co. Ltd.
19 November 1982	Redruth	Murdock & Trevithick Workshops for the Disabled

Date	Site	Name of Employer
	Truro	Truro Pottery, Chapel Hill
21 January 1983	Sowerby Bridge Halifax	Spring Bathrooms
	Halifax	Halifax Courier
	Keighley	Peter Black Holdings
28 January 1983	Glasgow	Glasgow Herald Offices
18 February 1983	Bamber Bridge, Preston	Dainichi-Sykes Galaxy (Mobile Units) Ltd.
	Salterforth	Silentnight Holdings Ltd.
	Bacup, Lancashire	Performance Plastics
11 March 1983	Felixstowe	Felixstowe Docks
	Mildenhall Industrial Estate	British Sugar Corporation
	Peterborough	Kohl and Son Therm-a-stor Ltd.
15 April 1983	London SW6	Marsh Brothers Ltd.
	Roehampton	Hugh Steeper Ltd.
29 April 1983	Derby	Bemrose plc
	Nottingham	Stag Furniture
1 September 1983	Beith	Future Technology Systems
	Kilbarchan	Smith and McLaurin
6 January 1984	Maidstone	TV South
		Royal British Legion Village
24 February 1984	Warwick University Science Park	Barclays Venture Centre
7 April 1984	Marazion	Community Centre Project
13 April 1984	London Docklands	Surrey Docks Tarmac Properties
	London Docklands	Limehouse Productions
	London Docklands	British Telecom
	London Docklands	Royal Docks
6 September 1984	Livingston	W. L. Gore
	Kinross	Todd & Duncan Ltd.
21 September 1984	Hawarden	British Aerospace
2 October 1984	Liverpool	Wavertree Technology Park
11 January 1985	Wolsey	Courtaulds Knitwear
15 March 1985	Henley on Thames	Videcom Ltd.
	Witney	H. R. Smith
26 April 1985	Deeside Industrial Park	Optical Fibres
	Mostyn Dock	Warwick Chemicals Ltd.
	St. Asaph	Pilkington PE Ltd.
5 August 1985	Farnham	Tindle Newspapers Ltd.
	Whitehill	Tindle Enterprise Centre
5 September 1985	Prestwick Airport	British Aerospace
6 September 1985	Knockando, near Dufftown	Knockando Distillery
9 September 1985	Blairgowrie	West Haugh Fruit Farm
	Dundee	D. C. Thomson Ltd.
	Glenberrie, near Stonehaven	Macphie & Co. Ltd.
	Aberdeen	Aberdeen Journals Ltd.
10 September 1985	Bradford	Allied Colloids plc
11 September 1985	Tyneside	Press Production Systems
	Stockton	Parkfield Foundries
	Darlington	Darlington & Simpson rolling mills
1 October 1985	Didcot	Rutherford Appleton Laboratory
1 November 1985	Capenhurst	BNFL
	Springfields	BNFL
	Sellafield	BNFL
	Heysham	CEGB
22 November 1985	Chessington	Plessey Radar Co.
17 January 1986	Luton	H Plan Furniture
	Hemel Hempstead	Crosfield Electronics
29 January 1986	Derby	Rolls Royce Crown Derby
14 February 1986	Cricklewood	Remploy

In addition to this list, I have of course visited many other places of work, such as hospitals, police stations, armed forces establishments, educational establishments and offices, which it would be impracticable to detail here.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 18 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of Turkey.

WALES

Planning Controls

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what representations he has received in relation to the Property Advisory Group's proposals for changes in planning controls in Wales; ano if he will make a statement;

(2) if he plans to introduce legislation to permit the use of residential premises in Wales by commercial concerns employing five or fewer staff;

(3) if he plans to introduce legislation to end the distinction between commercial and industrial premises in Wales for the purpose of planning controls;

(4) if he plans to introduce legislation to end planning controls on the development in Wales of residential homes or hostels for 10 or fewer residents.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A sub-group of the Property Advisory Group has reviewed the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972 (SI 1972 No. 1385) and has made recommendations for changes. Consultations about these recommendations as they affect Wales have been undertaken by the Welsh Office and 14 organisations have responded.

The effect of the use classes order is that if an occupier of land wishes to change the use of that land from one use to another within the same use class, he does not need planning permission to make that change.

The sub-group recommends, among other things, a new general business use class, to bring together the present use classes for offices and light industry, and a new residential use class which would include use of a building as a residence and for any other activity (other than a shop) compatible with that use subject to amenity and traffic safeguards and to the proviso that no more than five people engaged in any business activity are present in the building at any one time. The new residential use class would also include the provision of permanent housing accommodation for not more than 10 people.

The responses to the consultations are being considered by my right hon. Friend in conjunction with the consideration being given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to the responses to similar consultations in England.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of education spending by his Department for each of the last five years expressed as a proportion of the gross domestic product.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The figures relating to Voted expenditure by the Department are as follows:

	Percentage
1980-81	0·0018
1981-82	0·0021
1982-83	0·0023
1983-84	0·0024
1984-85	0·0025

Menai Straits Marine Nature Reserve

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will report progress on the creation of the Menai Straits marine nature reserve; and what proposals have been made for local participation in decision making.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Nature Conservancy Council has carried out informal consultations with interested parties and is now preparing a formal consultation document which it intends to circulate during the spring. This will include proposals for the involvement of representatives of local interests in the management of the reserve.

National Museum of Wales

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will hold an open, independent inquiry into the administration and running costs of the National museum of Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: No. The council of the National museum of Wales has appointed a new director and has taken steps to strengthen its financial administration. It is also setting up a full independent inquiry into the conduct and management of the museum's department of art. I see no need for a further inquiry of the kind proposed.

Student Grants

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions his Department had with local education authorities in Wales concerning the level of grants payable to young people between the ages of 16 and 21 years going on from school to higher or further education.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: None.

Higher Education (Advisory Board)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales what bodies have been asked to nominate members to the board of the Wales Advisory Board for Local Authority Higher Education; and if he will announce the new members.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The following bodies are invited to nominate members to the board of the Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education. The names of the members appointed to serve on the board from 1 January 1986 are shown along side their nominating body.

Membership of the Board of the Wales Advisory Body

Organisation	*Nominee(s)*
Committee of Directors of Polytenics	Dr. J. D. Davies OBE Director Polytechnic of Wales
Standing Conference of Principals and Directors of Colleges and Institutes of Higher Education	Dr. E. J. Brent Principal South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education
Association of Principals of Colleges	Dr. G. Stockdale, Principal, West Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education	Mr. Don Dale-Jones Regional Officer

Organisation	*Nominee(s)*
Council for National Academic Awards	Mr. R. W. Lewis Assistant Chief Officer
University of Wales	Dr. G. Owen Vice Chancellor University of Wales
Wales TUC	1. Mr. Hywel Vaughan Regional Official for Wales National Union of Teachers
Wales TUC	2. Mr. C. Thomas National and Local Government Officers Association
Business and Technician Education Council	Mr. E. Meats Chief Officer (Standards and Review)
Confederation of British Industry	1. Mr. H. Davies Executive Director Administration British Aerospace
Confederation of British Industry	2. Professor D. Embrey CBE Technical Director AB Electronic Products Group PLC
Welsh Counties Committee	1. Mr. S. G. Dunster County Treasurer West Glamorgan County Council
Welsh Counties Committee	2. Mr. I. Bowen Rees Chief Executive Gwynedd County Council
Welsh Joint Education Committee	3. Mr. K. S. Hopkins Director of Education Mid Glamorgan Council
Welsh Office	Mr. H. Evans Mr. L. Pritchard
Her Majesty's Inspectorate	Mr. P. C. Webb

In addition, we appoint the chairman and three board members without seeking nominations from any body or organisation. From 1 January 1986 the chairman and the three members concerned are:

Emeritus—Professor R. W. Steel CBE—Chairman
Mr. D. Webb—Assistant Director, WIN tech
Mr. P. G. Weekes OBE—ex-South Wales Area Director, National Coal Board
Mr. L. Wolfendale OBE—Managing Director, South Wales Switchgear Ltd

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Industry and Education

121. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what measures have been taken to seek to make education more relevant to the needs of industry.

Sir Keith Joseph: A major aim of Government policy is to ensure that all parts of the education system contribute effectively to the preparation of pupils and students for their working lives, that non-advanced further education is more reponsive to the demands of employers and that higher education contributes more effectively to improving the performance of the national economy. These objectives and the many specific measures taken to encourage the partnership between education and industry and commerce are set out in the White Papers "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469), "Training for Jobs (Cmnd. 9135), "Education and Training for Young People" (Cmnd. 9482), and in the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" (Cmnd. 9524).

Students (Financial Assistance)

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to be in a position to announce what further additional financial assistance is planned to be available for students in further education who are in genuine need.

Mr. Walden: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Alvey Programme

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will publish an estimate of the additional costs incurred by universities involved in the Alvey programme;

(2) if he intends to meet additional costs to universities involved in the Alvey programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Science and Engineering Research Council's grants provided under the Alvey programme cover expenditure in the following areas:

i. employment of additional temporary research, technical and other assistants;
ii. major capital faciliies and special scientific apparatus not customary for the institution itself to provide;
iii. essential materials and services on a scale which the institution is unable to supply;
iv visits by investigators to recognised centres abroad to study new techniques and research developments.

These areas are common to all the council's research grants. No estimate is available centrally for other costs which, under the dual support system, are borne by the university concerned from its UGC block grant. No further specific provision will be made.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the universities and other educational institutions currently involved in the Alvey programme.

Mr. Walden: The following universities and other educational institutions are currently involved in the Alvey programme:

Universities
Aberdeen
Aston
Bath
Birmingham
Bradford
Bristol
Brunel
Cambridge
Dundee
Durham
East Anglia
Edinburgh
Essex

Exeter
Glasgow
Heriot-Watt
Hull
Keale
Kent
Lancaster
Leeds
Leicester
Liverpool
London University:
Institute of Neurology
Imperial College
King's College
Middlesex Hospital Medical School
Queen Elizabeth College
Queen Mary College
School of Oriental and African Studies
University College
Loughborough
Manchester
Newcastle
Nottingham
Open
Oxford
Queens Belfast
Reading
St. Andrews
Salford
Sheffield
Southampton
Stirling
Strathclyde
Surrey
Sussex
Ulster
UWIST

University of Wales
University College Aberystwyth
University College Cardiff
University College Swansea
UWIST

Warwick
York

Polytechnics
Central London
City
Hatfield
Lanchester
Leicester
Middlesex
Newcastle
Plymouth
Sheffield
South Bank
Teeside
Thames
Trent

Other Institutions
Cranfield Institute of Technology

Inner London Education Authority

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science to what level the Inner London education authority would have to reduce its spending *(a)* to receive any rate support grant, and *(b)* to receive maximum rate support grant; and what that maximum grant would be.

Mr. Chris Patten: On the basis of the rate support grant settlement announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in December, the Inner London education authority would receive block grant in 1986-87 if its spending were less than £521 million. The authority would receive the maximum block grant for which it could theoretically qualify if its total expenditure were £385 million, at that point its block grant would be equal to its expenditure.

The objectives of the block grant system are to compensate for differences in needs and rateable resources between authorities. Achievement of these objectives requires that authorities with high rateable resources should receive less grant than authorities less favourably placed; the discouragement of high levels of spending also requires that in general authorities should face a loss of grant as they increase their expenditure. The level of expenditure at which the Inner London education authority would attract block grant is a reflection of its high rateable resources. There is no implication that the authority should spend at or below this level.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many applications have been submitted for postgraduate teacher training courses in each academic year since 1978-79; and what proportion of these were granted a place.

Mr. Chris Patten: Figures showing the number of applications for PGCE courses processed by the Graduate Teacher Training Registry and the number and percentage of those applicants who took up places on courses in each year between 1978 and 1985 are as follows. The figures do not include those applicants and entrants who applied direct to institutions.

Entry	*Applications*	*Entrants*	*Column 3 as percentage Column 2*
1978	15,061	9,363	58·3
1979	15,774	9,461	60·0
1980	17,160	10,721	62·5
1981	18,783	10,518	56·0
1982	19,020	8,845	46·5
1983	18,473	8,011	43·4
1984	18,760	8,123	43·5
1985	17,084	8,168	47·8

GCSE (Representations)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science from which local authorities he has received representations, and what is the nature of their representations, concerning the introduction of the general certificate of secondary education in the current year.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since my right hon. Friend announced the introduction of the GCSE in June 1984, the Department has received letters from some 50 local education authorities raising various issues about the GCSE. The main points raised have concerned: the timetable for the introduction of the new examinations, the special programme of GCSE in-service training, and the allocation of resources.

Plant Breeding Institute and National Seed Development Organisation

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether the Government have come to any decision about the future of the Plant Breeding Institute and the National Seed Development Organisation.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Agriculture Ministers and I have decided that a transfer of the National Seed Development Organisation and part of the Plant Breeding Institute to the private sector would be desirable provided that it can be achieved on satisfactory terms. We will now be consulting interested parties and will be seeking assistance from financial advisers. I shall make a further statement in due course.

ENVIRONMENT

Tobacco Companies (Advertisements)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of any advice he receives from the Sports Council or any other organisation in receipt of public funding on the working of the present voluntary agreement between the tobacco companies and the governing bodies of sport.

Mr. Tracey: Yes; I have today placed in the Library submissions from the Sports Council, the Health Education Council and the ASH group (Action on Smoking and Health).

Building Regulations

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the review of the thermal insulation standards of the building regulations is expected to be concluded; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The requirements for the conservation of fuel and power are being looked at as part of a general review of the technical requirements of the regulations. A consultative document will be issued later this year.

Council House Sales

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the latest figure for the total number of council house sales since 1979.

Sir George Young: From April 1979 to September 1985, about 710,000 dwellings were sold by local authorities and new towns in England.

Rate Support Grant (Stockport)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, columns *333-34*, if he will set out in the terms used in paragraphs B25-B29 of annex B of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714, the means of calculation of the rate support grant for the metropolitan district of Stockport in 1985-86.

Mr. Waldegrave: Paragraph B.27 of annex B to the Greeen Paper "Paying for Local Government" Cmnd. 9714 indicates that the formula in the subsequent paragraph refers to 1986-87. The additional cost for each pound of expenditure above GRE is shown as 1·1p; in 1985-86 it is 0·69p as shown in paragrah 4 of annex J to the "Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1985-86". The formula is, therefore:

$$GRP = GRP^* + 0{\cdot}69p \frac{(\text{Total Expenditure} - \text{GRE})}{(\text{population})}$$

For Stockport MBC using budgeted expenditure and the figures determined in the "Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) (No. 2) 1985-86", this calculation is:

$$GRP = 149{\cdot}7424p + 0{\cdot}69p \frac{(£93{,}118{,}000 - £94{,}104{,}000)}{(288{,}900)} = 147{\cdot}387468p$$

As paragraph B.25 shows:

Block grant = total expenditure - (GRP × rateable value)

For Stockport this calculation is:

Block grant = £93,118,000 - (147·387468p × £38,485,390)

Block grant = £36,395,358

This figure is then subject to a small adjustment to £36,396,938 so that the total of entitlements for all authorities is equal to the total grant payable.

The answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, columns 333-34, referred to rate support grant, in real terms, as the hon. Member requested. Domestic rate relief grant of £4,610,328 was added to the block grant entitlement to give £41,007,266 and this was divided by the GDP deflator of 1·05 to convert the total from cash terms to real terms. The result, £39,054,539 was rounded to £39·1 million.

Vacant Land (Cheltenham)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the acreage of vacant land in the Cheltenham district in each of the last five years.

Sir George Young: This information is not held centrally.

Rates

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will re-calculate the relationship of gross and net community charge to net household income as set out in figure F.4, and the relationship of rates and community charge, both gross and net, to net household income in each band of equivalent net income as set out in figure F.5 in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714, on the basis of existing conditions for the payment of rates.

Mr. Waldegrave: The information requested is as follows:

Figure F4 (revised)

Relationship of gross and net communtiy charge to net household income—under existing social security arrangements (Great Britain 1984-85 prices)*

	Ranges of net household income (£pw)											
	Under 50	*50-75*	*75-100*	*100-150*	*150-200*	*200-250*	*250-300*	*300-350*	*350-400*	*400-500*	*500+*	*All households*
Community charge												
Gross £pw	3·06	4·00	4·90	5·47	6·10	6·76	7·58	8·28	9·05	9·62	10·04	5·74
Net £pw	0·28	1·09	2·37	4·41	5·50	6·26	6·98	7·74	8·37	8·86	9·33	4·36
As a percentage of net income in each range												
Gross	7·30	6·50	5·70	4·40	3·50	3·00	2·80	2·60	2·40	2·20	1·60	3·60
Net	0·70	1·80	2·70	3·50	3·20	2·80	2·60	2·40	2·20	2·00	1·50	3·00

*Assuming full replacement of rates.

Figures F5 (revised)

Relationship of rates and community charge (both gross and net) to net household income in each band of equivalent net income—under existing social security arrangements (Great Britain 1984-85 prices)*

	Ranges of equivalent net household income (£pw)											
	Under 50	*50-75*	*75-100*	*100-150*	*150-200*	*200-250*	*250-300*	*300-350*	*350-400*	*400-500*	*500+*	*All households*
Average local tax bill (£pw)												
Gross rates	4·48	4·81	5·35	5·88	6·39	6·76	7·59	8·36	9·50	10·22	12·49	5·68
Gross community charge	4·49	4·80	5·88	6·31	6·45	6·22	6·11	6·19	6·15	6·06	6·64	5·74
Net rates	0·23	1·82	4·72	5·74	6·35	6·74	7·58	8·32	9·50	10·12	12·46	4·48
Net community charge	0·16	1·81	4·89	5·89	6·25	6·11	6·02	6·11	6·06	5·96	6·64	4·36
Average local tax bill (as a percentage of net income in each equivalent income band)												
Gross rates	7·90	5·90	4·00	3·20	2·80	2·60	2·60	2·50	2·50	2·30	1·80	3·60
Gross community charge	7·90	5·90	4·40	3·40	2·90	2·40	2·10	1·90	1·60	1·40	1·00	3·60
Net rates	0·40	2·20	3·50	3·10	2·80	2·60	2·60	2·50	2·50	2·30	1·80	3·00
Net community charge	0·30	2·20	3·70	3·20	2·80	2·40	2·00	1·80	1·60	1·40	1·00	3·00

*Assuming full replacement of rates.

Community Charge

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has made any investigations into which countries use community charge or poll tax as a way of raising local revenue; and if he will list those that do together with any country where a poll tax has been used in this way but is no longer so used.

Mr. Waldegrave: The arrangements for financing local government in other developed countries have been taken into account in preparing the proposals in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714). They are discussed in annex K. However, the Government's proposals for reform flow from our analysis of the problems with the existing arrangements in this country.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the contribution to be paid by Government Departments in terms of paragraph G.37 of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714, as a contribution in lieu of the community charge, will be based on a full payment for the average nightly population of adults staying in the Crown property concerned for the financial year in question.

Mr. Waldegrave: Annex G, paragraph G.34 of the Green Paper indicates that we shall be consulting separately on the properties which should be liable for the collective community charge and how their liability should be assessed. Paragraph G.37 also promises separate consultation on the position of Crown property under the new system.

Crown Property

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the proposal for community charge for the occupancy of Crown property, outlined in paragraph G.37 of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714, will apply to places occupied by the armed forces of other countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: At present properties in Britain used by our NATO allies are treated as Crown property for rating purposes. The treatment of such property under the proposed system will be dealt with as part of the separate consultation on Crown property referred to in annex G, paragraph G.34 of the Green Paper.

Local Authority Services

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what information he has as to how many contracts have been awarded to private companies following competitive tendering for refuse collection services of local authorities for each of the past six years;

(2) what information he has as to the total savings which have been made from the competitive tendering for local authority refuse collection services for each of the past six years;

(3) what information he has as to those contracts for refuse collection services which reverted to the local authority or its agents following competitive tendering which had formerly been awarded to private contractors for each of the past six years;

(4) what information he has as to how many local authorities have invited competitive tenders for the refuse collection service in each of the past six years;

(5) what information he has as to those contracts for local authority architects' services which reverted to the local authority or its agents following competitive tendering which had formerly been awarded to private contractors for each of the past six years;

(6) what information he has as to how many contracts have been awarded to private companies following competitive tendering for the architects' services of local authorities for each of the past six years;

(7) what information he has on how many local authorities have invited competitive tenders for the architects' services for each of the past six years;

(8) what information he has as to the total savings which have been made from the competitive tendering for local authority architects' services for each of the past six years.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Department does not collect systematic data on these subjects, but some useful information may be found in the annual surveys of contracting out which have appeared in *Local Government Chronicle* issues dated 17 June 1983, 22 June 1984, and 5 July 1985; and in the newsletter "Public Service Review" published by the Public Service Research Centre.

Housing (Redevelopment)

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of dwellings disposed of by local authorities to private trusts or developers to date for refurbishment or redevelopment for sale (i) for England as a whole and (ii) for each local authority.

Sir George Young: We are aware of 5,891 dwellings which English local authorities have sold empty to private developers for refurbishment for sale or for private renting, since the Government took office. The list is not necessarily exhaustive, as local authorities are not required to seek the Secretary of State's consent or to inform the Department when they are disposing of empty housing at the best price. In addition, with the Secretary of State's consent, 3,007 dwellings, the great majority of them tenanted, were disposed of by Knowsley to the Stockbridge village trust, and 35 tenanted dwellings by Oldham to William Irwin and Co. Ltd. in the redevelopment of 141 houses at Pennine Meadows, Oldham. Following a vote by residents, a trust is being formed to take over about 5,500 tenanted homes at Thamesmead, after the abolition of the Greater London council.

Number of empty council dwellings disposed of to the private sector

Local authority	*Number*
Birmingham	83
Burnley	111
Calderdale	96
Halton	38
Knowsley	198
Langbaurgh	177
Lichfield	128
Liverpool	344
Manchester	46
Newcastle	134
North Tyneside	150
Oldham	295
Preston	234
Salford	834
Sandwell	48
Sefton	600
Solihull	184
South Tyneside	150
Stoke on Trent	42
Sunderland	386
Thurrock	90
Tower Hamlets	158
Wandsworth	981
Westminster	10
Wigan	98
Wirral	269
Wolverhampton	7
Total	5,891

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the capital receipt per dwelling obtained by the local authority under each scheme where blocks of flats or housing estates have been disposed of to private companies for refurbishment or redevelopment for sale with the aid of an urban development grant.

Sir George Young: Lists of projects approved for urban development grant are placed regularly in the Library of the House. For reasons of commercial confidentiality, it is not the practice to disclose details of costs incurred by the developers carrying out individual projects supported by UDG. Where such a project includes acquisition by the developer of land or buildings owned by a local authority, it is usual for the property to be acquired at its open market value in its existing condition. In approved UDG schemes for the refurbishment for sale of existing local authority housing, with or without an element of demolition or new build, prices have ranged from £270 per existing dwelling to £2,855, the average being £1,431.

Right-to-Repair Scheme

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements his Department has made to monitor the operation of the right-to-repair scheme introduced under the Housing and Building Control Act 1984.

Sir George Young: The right-to-repair scheme is being monitored by means of an additional section in the quarterly housing activity form completed by local authorities. The new section covers the number of applications, the number which were refused and the reasons, the number of claims made under the default procedure and the extent to which contractors have been used.

Stockbridge Village Trust

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department expects to complete its

current inquiries into the management and finances of the Stockbridge village trust; and when he intends to publish the findings of these inquiries.

Sir George Young: In response to a request from the Stockbridge village trust for additional public sector assistance, we have appointed the accountants, Ernst and Whinney, to undertake a financial appraisal of the trust's position and long-term prospects. We expect them to complete their work shortly and will be discussing the findings with the trust. We do not intend to publish the appraisal.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Cancer (West Cumbria)

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement about the discharge of radioactive material from the Sellafield site in the 1950s and the implications for the conclusions reached by the independent advisory group chaired by Sir Douglas Black which investigated possible increased incidence of cancer in West Cumbria.

Mr. Hayhoe: New information became available when British Nuclear Fuels plc undertook last year a review of records of discharges which had taken place in the 1950s. This information was not available when the National Radiological Protection Board calculated doses of radiation received by the local population for the Independent Advisory Group (chairman: Sir Douglas Black) set up to investigate a possible increased incidence of cancer in west Cumbria. The NRPB has since revised its dose estimates in the light of this new information and its provisional findings have been passed to the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

COMARE was established as a result of a recommendation in Sir Douglas Black's report. One of the committee's first tasks was to follow up that report and to consider the health implications of any research results or other information which became available. The committee met for the first time on 25 November 1985. It was told about the existence of this new information and was asked to undertake an assessment of its health significance. It started on this work at its meeting on 31 January 1986. It will complete its work as soon as possible, it is hoped within the next six months. Its report will be published.

It is the role of COMARE to advise the Government on the health implications of this new information. It would not be appropriate for the Government to prejudge its findings. However, NRPB's provisional conclusions are that the new information does not suggest that there has been any increased health risk to people who lived or who are living in the area which would invalidate the conclusions reached by Sir Douglas Black's group.

Pensions

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the weekly rate of retirement pension on 1 December of each year since 1956, in actual and in real terms at current prices; and what proportion the figures represented each year of average industrial wages for adult men.

Mr. Major: The available figures are contained in table 5.1 of the "Abstract of Statistics for Index of Retail Prices, Average Earnings, Social Security Benefits and Contributions", a copy of which may be found in the Library. The dates for which comparisons are shown are those on which retirement pensions were uprated, which is the most meaningful basis for real value comparisons.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the annual cost if the state retirement pension for single persons were increased from the present level to £56 per week, and for married couples from the present level to £84 per week.

Mr. Major: The estimated annual additional cost of this proposal to public expenditure is £6,250 million in a full year, allowing for savings on supplementary benefit and housing benefit.

Retirement Age

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table indicating his estimates of the additional annual cost to Government funds on areas within his responsibility if the retirement age for *(a)* men and *(b)* women were reduced in 12-month steps from their present level to a uniform retirement age of 55 years of age.

Mr. Major: No figures are available to show the estimated additional cost of reducing the retirement age to below age 60 for men, nor are any figures available to show the estimated additional cost of reducing the retirement age for women to below the present retirement age of 60. The net estimated additional annual cost to public funds of reducing the retirement age for men from age 65 to age 60 is as follows:

Estimated additional annual cost (rounded) (1983-84 benefit rates)

Reduction in retirement age to:	*£ million*
64	400
63	900
62	1,400
61	1,900
60	2,600

These figures also take account of the increase in tax revenue which could result from a change.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what delays are occuring in the north-east section of the London ambulance service in respect of outpatient journeys; and what action he plans to take to seek to prevent their recurrence.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that because of increased demands on the London ambulance service's non-emergency services, delays do sometimes occur. The South West Thames regional health authority, which manages the LAS, is considering how those services can be improved and the hon. Member may wish to make his views known to the regional chairman. Improvements in the emergency service are expected as a result of the introduction of new staff working rotas on 3 March.

Orphans

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy towards the role of the voluntary sector in providing care for orphans; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Local authorities have a duty to receive into care any child who has neither a parent nor guardian and it is a matter for them to decide on the most appropriate placement for the child. Placement with a voluntary agency is one of a number of valued options available to local authorities.

Hip Replacement

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the current average times for hip replacement operations in the northern region.

Mr. Whitney: The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to a National Health Service hospital for total hip replacement and other arthroplasty of hip in the Northern regional health authority in 1983, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, was 30 weeks.

Abortions

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many abortions were carried out in National Health Service premises on women giving their ususal place of residence as Scotland in each year since 1968.

Mr. Hayhoe: The full information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, the table shows available information on the number of legal abortions to residents of Scotland that were carried out in National Health Service premises in England and Wales from 1973 to 1984.

Notifications of legal abortions carried out under the 1967 Abortion Act in NHS premises in England and Wales. Area of usual residence: Scotland, 1973-1984

Year	Number
1973	12
1974	28
1975	13
1976	22
1977	22
1978	17
1979	16
1980	23
1981	15
1982	13
1983	27
1984	29

Under-age Girls (Contraception)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet ready to issue guidelines to doctors on the prescription of oral contraceptives to under-age girls; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 28 January, at column *496*.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give figures for National Health Service expenditure in England for each of the years 1979-80 to 1984-85 and as estimated for 1985-86, in cash, cost, and volume terms making use of the deflator factors appropriate to the National Health Service in England, showing also the figures as indices with 1979-80 as a base year.

Mr. Hayhoe: The tables provide the information which the right hon. Member requested. It is not possible to express expenditure on the National Health Service in 1985-86 in terms of National Health Service pay and prices, since the appropriate pay and price indices are not yet available.

Expenditure on the National Health Service in England

£ million

	Cash expenditure	In cost terms (1984-85 price level)	In terms of National Health Service pay and prices (1984-85)
1979-80	7,630	11,622	12,678
1980-81	9,954	12,766	12,999
1981-82	11,162	13,016	13,356
1982-83	12,177	13,270	13,569
1983-84	12,887	13,440	13,683
1984-85	13,805	13,805	13,805
1985-86	14,607	13,911	*

* Not calculable.

Expenditure on the National Health Service in England

	Cash expenditure	In cost terms	In terms of National Health Service pay and prices
1979-80	100	100	100
1980-81	130·5	109·8	102·5
1981-82	146·3	112·0	105·3
1982-83	159·6	114·2	107·0

	Cash expenditure	In cost terms	In terms of National Health Service pay and prices
1983-84	168·9	115·6	107·9
1984-85	180·9	118·8	108·9
1985-86	191·4	119·7	*

*Not calculable.

Orthopaedic Waiting Lists

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the longest time a patient now waits for an orthopaedic operation in the West Surrey and North-East Hampshire district health authority area;

(2) what is the average time patients have to wait for an orthopaedic operation in the West Surrey and North-East Hampshire district health authority area.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry that I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. This is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the West Surrey and North East Hampshire district health authority for this information.

Christmas Bonus

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider index-linking the £10 Christmas bonus for pensioners.

Mr. Newton: We have no present plans to do so.

Pensioners (Cost of Living)

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much the separate retail price index showing the increase in the cost of living for pensioners has risen in each year since 1979; and by how much the retirement pension has risen in each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: The information requested is in the table:

	Percentage increase			
	RP* single	RP* couple	PPI† single	PPI† couple
November 1979 to November 1980	16·5	16·5	14·7	14·0
November 1980 to November 1981	9·0	9·0	10·7	11·5
November 1981 to November 1982	11·0	11·0	7·5	7·0
November 1982 to November 1983	3·7	3·7	4·6	4·8
November 1983 to November 1984	5·1	5·1	4·4	4·5
November 1984 to November 1985	7·0	7·0	4·8	4·7

* Retirement pension.
† Pensioner price index.

Community Charge

Mr. Christopher Hawkins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether *(a)* retirement pensions and *(b)* other social security benefits will be raised to cover the proposed minimum contribution to rates or the proposed community charge.

Mr. Newton: It would be inappropriate to raise retirement pensions for this reason, since around half of retirement pensioners do not now receive any help with their rates. So far as income-related benefits are concerned, my right hon. Friend has made it clear that the proposed social security structure will need to be developed in the light of discussions on the recent Green Paper on local government finance.

Single Payments

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the number and value of single payments of supplementary benefit in the four social security offices serving Sheffield taken together in each year since November 1980, showing separately figures for maternity expenses, funeral expenses and other single payments.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c. *528*]: The following table sets out the figures that are available:

	Sheffield				
	North East	North West	South East	South West	Total
April 1982-83					
Awards	5,691	6,370	4,755	3,290	20,106
Value (£)	346,698	322,683	225,539	167,644	1,062,564
April 1983-84					
Awards	10,217	8,898	8,110	4,125	31,350
Value (£)	812,592	634,242	484,045	284,323	2,215,202
April 1984-85					
Awards	16,628	13,546	11,785	7,812	49,771
Value (£)	1,318,922	911,872	663,665	495,334	3,389,793
April 1985 to 14 January 1986					
Awards	20,851	18,167	15,366	11,594	65,978
Value (£)	1,505,493	1,213,091	799,359	895,547	4,413,490

This information is not available prior to April 1982, nor collected separately for maternity or funeral expenses.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Haiti

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the intentions of Her Majesty's Government in respect of ratification of the agreement with the Government of Haiti signed at Port-au-Prince on 18 March 1985.

Mr. Eggar: The investment promotion and protection agreement with the Government of Haiti, signed at Port-au-Prince on 18 March 1985, was laid before Parliament on 30 January 1986 and published on 31 January 1986 as Haiti No. 1 (1986), Cmnd. 9731. We intend to ratify the agreement as soon as the necessary procedures on both sides have been completed.

PLO (January Statement)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what report he has received from Her Majesty's ambassador in Baghdad about the public statement on the outcome of the meeting of the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organisation meeting on 15 January relating to increased military operations against Israel and support for Libya.

Mr. Renton: None. A translation of the statement as broadcast by the "Voice of Palestine" was published in the BBC "Summary of World Broadcasts" for 17 January.

Libya

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has made any contingency plans to protect the British community in Libya in the event of any invasion of that country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We plan on a world-wide basis for contingencies affecting the safety of British communities abroad, taking account of particular circumstances in individual countries.

ENERGY

British Gas (Sites)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the location and respective size of each site owned or managed by the British Gas Corporation, that is either surplus to requirements or derelict land in England and Wales.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: Information (which includes the area of each site) on unused or underused land owned by the British Gas Corporation, and by other public bodies, is held on registers in accordance with the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. Registers covering the whole of England are available for inspection at the Department of the Environment headquarters. Each of that Department's regional offices and each local authority holds a register of such sites which are within its boundaries. Registers covering Wales are being drawn up, but are not yet complete and I am asking the chairman of the corporation to write to the hon. Member with the relevant information.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Licensing (Occasional Provisions) Act 1983

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has received any representations on the working of the Licensing (Occasional Provisions) Act 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The only recent representations received about this legislation have been those forwarded by my hon. Friend. These are being considered.

Advisory Committee on Community Radio

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details about how many minority community groups are represented on his advisory committee on community radio.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The members of the advisory panel on community radio were appointed not to represent particular groups but on the basis of their knowledge of broadcasting and community matters. The membership includes a number active in community or voluntary organisations; and two are leading members of the Community Radio Association.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the present operating capacity of Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: 350.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans for the development of a positive regime at Holloway prison have been drawn up by the regional director and governor in consultation with staff associations, as recommended by the Holloway special project committee;

(2) what plans there are to allow appropriate inmates at Holloway prison more freedom of movement within the prison as recommended by the report of the Holloway special project committee.

Mr. Mellor: A multi-disciplinary group of staff at Holloway, under the governor's direction, is examining ways of improving the regime and providing more freedom of movement within the prison for those inmates for whom it is appropriate, in discussion with senior management, staff and the staff associations.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department at what time prisoners are usually locked up for the night at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: Between 7.30 pm and 7.45 pm if staff are available for evening duties; if not, at 4.30 pm.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the mother and baby unit at Holloway prison has moved to its new accommodation.

Mr. Mellor: Not yet.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether babies from the mother and baby unit at Holloway prison are taken outside the prison in order to increase their contact with the outside world.

Mr. Mellor: Not as a matter of course, but any case in which this seemed to be in the child's best interests would be sympathetically considered.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many education classes took place at Holloway prison in the daytime and evening, respectively; and how many prisoners on average attended each class, in the most recent week for which statistics are available.

Mr. Mellor: During the two-week period 20 January to 3 February, 37 daytime classes were attended by 144 inmates. Fifteen evening classes were attended by 56 inmates.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if prisoners in C1 unit at Holloway prison currently have regular access to the skills training unit;

(2) whether prisoners from C1 unit at Holloway prison are allowed to take work from the skills training unit back to C1 unit.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) on 23 January, at columns 274-75, on the question of access. Prisoners from C1 unit are allowed to take paper, pencils and crayons from the skills training unit back to C1 unit.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hours a day on average prisoners in C1 unit at Holloway prison spent locked up in their cells in the most recent week for which statistics are available.

Mr. Mellor: My reply on 23 January to my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving), at column 274, sets out the most recent information.

Prisoners (Visits)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in the regulations concerning visits to prisoners are currently under active consideration.

Mr. Mellor: The only imminent change concerns the frequency and duration of visits to unconvicted prisoners, on which a circular instruction will be issued shortly (a copy of which will be placed in the Library).

Drunkenness (Cautions)

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what communications he has received from the Association of Chief Police Officers on the way in which cautioning schemes are developing; and what views it has expressed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The views of the Association of Chief Police Officers were taken into account in preparing Home Office circular 14/1985, which contained guidance to chief officers on cautioning policy and practice. Copies are in the Library. The operation of cautioning schemes is a matter for individual chief officers. We are aware that police forces have in general implemented the circular or have been reviewing their cautioning policies and methods in the light of the circular but we have not received communications from the association specially about the way in which schemes are developing. We shall, however, be monitoring the effect of the circular on cautioning rates.

Gaming Machines

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to prevent the use and misuse of gaming machines by juveniles in places to which the public have access.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The maximum stake and prize permitted in amusement with prizes machines are deliberately kept low, and jackpot machines, which offer bigger prizes, are not allowed in places to which the public have access. Premises with amusement with prizes machines must obtain permits under the Gaming Act 1968. We have no present plans to add to the existing controls in this area.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons currently held in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* Swansea prisons, respectively, are former in-patients at mental hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available centrally.

Police (Duties)

Mr. McGuire asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* those functions and duties formerly carried out solely by the police which have been passed to other bodies since 1955, giving, in each case, details of total numbers now employed in each new service; if he has any plans to relieve the police of further duties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information requested is not readily available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The employment of additional civilians in police forces has enabled many police officers to be released from posts which do not require their powers and training for redeployment on operational duties.

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis on how many officers were deployed on the evening of 13 February at the News International plant at Wapping; at what estimated cost; how many arrests have taken place since the beginning of the print dispute; and with what offences those arrested have been charged.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Up to 17 February, 194 people had been arrested in connection with this dispute. The charges include offences of criminal damage, being in possession of an offensive weapon, unlawful wounding, assault occasioning actual bodily harm, assaulting a police officer, obstructing a police officer, threatening

behaviour, obstructing the highway, and being drunk and disorderly. 289 officers were deployed on the evening of 13 February. I regret that information about the cost of the police operation that night is not readily available.

Print Workers (Police Action)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Hampshire as to the circumstances in which two coaches of print workers were stopped by officers of the force on the way to Eastleigh on 13 February and as to the sources of the information on which they acted in arranging this stop; and if he will make a statement on the substance of the report.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that on 13 February his officers stopped two parties of print workers on the A33 at Compton, 4 to 5 miles from Eastleigh. They asked the travellers not to continue their journey as they feared a breach of the peace. The coach drivers and some of the passengers agreed; the remainder made their way to Eastleigh by other means. Six arrests were made at Eastleigh that day, including charges for breach of the peace and criminal damage. It is not police practice to identify sources of information in circumstances such as these.

Lorries (Grosvenor Road, SW1)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been for overweight lorries travelling along Grosvenor road, SW1 in the last three months.

Mr. Mellor: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that in the three months ending 31 December 1985, there were no prosecutions solely for a lorry exceeding the weight limit specified for Grosvenor road, SW1. One offender was, however, cautioned and one case relating to an incident during that period remains to be dealt with.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be the total cost to public funds of the Metropolitan police in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As police authority for the metropolis, I have approved estimates which provide for net revenue expenditure by the Metropolitan police of £851·8 million in 1986-87. This is an increase of 10·4 per cent. on the revised cash limit of £771·184 million for 1985-86 which I announced to the House on 30 October 1985, at column *562*.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the category entitled animal experiments to select, develop or study the use of medicinal, dental and veterinary products and appliances contained in Cmnd. 9574 are related to cosmetic preparations for medicinal purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1986, c. *149*]: The commonly used definition of a cosmetic includes cosmetic products which have some medicinal effects, unless their action is wholly for treating or preventing disease. Precise figures are not available, but it is likely that very few tests of cosmetic preparations with medicinal effects are included in the statistics of animal experiments to select, develop or study the use, and so on, of medical, dental and veterinary products and appliances. Tests on such substances would normally be included under the heading "cosmetics and toiletries."

NATIONAL FINANCE

Capital Investment

124. **Mr. Galley** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how his Department assesses the employment potential of different types of public sector and private sector capital investment.

Mr. MacGregor: The important criterion for both public and private sector projects is that they should earn a proper rate of return. Public sector projects are assessed accordingly, taking into account wider economic and social benefits.

London Financial Markets

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer of 7 February to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Deakins), *Official Report*, columns *277-8*, *(a)* there has been in the past or *(b)* there is currently any contingent obligation in the future regarding liabilities on the taxpayer under a guarantee to rescue any member of the London gold market other than Johnson Matthey Bankers Ltd., or any member of any of the London financial markets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: No such guarantee has been given since 1979.

VAT

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the public sector's share of total value added tax, measured as a proportion of gross domestic product, less subsidies, since 1981.

Mr. Brooke: Estimates of the overall gross payments of value added tax by central Government, local authorities and public corporations are not available.

Civil Servants

Mr. Moate asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the numbers of civil servants each year for the last 10 years and at the present time.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

1 April	*Staff in Post (SIP) (Nos)*
1976	747,614
1977	745,550
1978	735,656
1979	732,275
1980	704,903
1981	689,602
1982	666,362
1983	648,912

1 April	Staff in Post (SIP) (Nos)
1984	623,972
1985	599,026
1 October 1985	595,764

The SIP figures for 1 January 1986 are currently being collated.

Nationalised Industries (Surplus Land)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice his Department has given to nationalised industries that own or manage sites that are surplus to requirement or derelict land; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986]: Nationalised industries are expected to operate commercially within the framework laid down by their statutes and the Government. As such they have an incentive to sell assets, including land, which are surplus to their requirements. Additionally, industries which have unused or underused land on the land registers held by the Department of the Environment are subject to the provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

DEFENCE

Wood Farm Camp, Malvern

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Defence for how long the 14 residential properties at Wood Farm camp, Malvern, have been empty; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* the prices being asked for their sale.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There are now 17 surplus properties at Wood Farm camp, Malvern, the last of which was vacated in November 1985. All are currently being advertised for sale to service men under the discounted sales scheme. The open market value of the properties ranges from £22,500 to £24,200.

Fleet Supply Ship

Mr. Bagier asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the placing of an order with British Shibuilders for a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation fleet supply ship; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The hon. Member is presumably referring to the British Shipbuilders' design fleet support king 20/20. This design has been studied by the Ministry of Defence with interest, as are any new equipment proposals put forward by industry.

The Royal Navy does not at present have a requirement for a new vessel of this type. However, should a requirement for such a vessel arise, it would be the MOD's intention to seek competitive tenders from all United Kingdom shipyards capable of its design and construction.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Development Agency and Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the budgets for the financial year beginning April 1986 for the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The net overall provision for the 1986-87 financial year for both the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board was published in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702) in January 1986 and in the "Scottish Commentary" published by the Scottish Office on 12 February 1986. I refer the hon. Member to either of these publications.

Leith Academy

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received about the future of Leith academy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: When I met representatives of Lothian regional council on 24 January, I offered to give consent for an additional allocation of capital expenditure to facilitate the building of a new Leith academy, provided that this formed part of a rationalisation of the provision of secondary school places in north Edinburgh. Since that meeting I have had letters from the school staff and from a parent inviting me to reconsider my position. I would not feel justified, however, in giving the consent in question unless there is a reduction in the existing surplus of secondary school places in the wider area, since to do so would be detrimental to the interests of Lothian ratepayers and the overall quality of education.

Rowntree-Mackintosh Plant, Edinburgh

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to whether any company has agreed to take over and run Rowntree-Mackintosh's Edinburgh plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hospital Nursing Services

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will meet representatives of the nursing profession in Northern Ireland to discuss the management of hospital nursing services.

Mr. Needham: If my hon. Friend will let me have details of the issues which may be causing concern, I will arrange for them to be given appropriate consideration.

Health and Social Services Boards (Elderly Persons)

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be the additional costs to the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland of providing for each extra person *(a)* over the age of 65 years and *(b)* over the age of 75 years up to 1992.

Mr. Needham: It is not possible to estimate with any acceptable degree of accuracy the costs to the health and social services boards of providing for individuals in various age groups.

Griffiths Report

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the introduction in Northern Ireland of the recommendations contained in the Griffiths report.

Mr. Needham: The Griffiths report did not extend to Northern Ireland but, following local consultation, the Government have accepted that its recommendations about personal accountability and maximum delegation are as applicable to Northern Ireland as to the rest of the United Kingdom. A range of management initiatives has been drawn up by the Department of Health and Social Services, the most important of which has been the appointment of a general manager for each of the four health and social services boards from 1 April 1985. In addition, a supervisory board has been appointed to advise the responsible Minister.

Health and Social Services

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to the level of spending on health and social services in Northern Ireland as compared with that in England; and what methods are used to calculate such comparisons.

Mr. Needham: Expenditure per capita on the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland is about 25 per cent. higher than in England. The latest comparisons available, showing expenditure per capita of £422 in Northern Ireland compared with £336 in England, are drawn from expenditure data in the "Government's Expendiute Plans" (Cmnd. 9702), divided by mid-1984 population estimates.

Health Visitors

Mr. Gow asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the grading of health visitors in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Needham: Health visitors in Northern Ireland are graded on the same basis as their colleagues in the rest of the United Kingdom.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

"Official Report"

Mr. McWilliam asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, how many *(a)* Reporters and *(b)* Trainees were currently actually in post in the *Official Report* at 12 February; and what are the expected future temporary and permanent losses in each category to 30 April 1986.

Mr. Beith: On 12 February there were five Reporters and 11 trainees actually in post in the *Official Report*. Three of the trainees have completed the two years training and are awaiting their confirmation by the Editor as full Reporters. In addition, one Reporter was substituting to Committee Sub-Editor and one was on maternity leave. Both will have left permanently by 30 April, as will two trainee Reporters. So far as can be foreseen, one of the five Reporters will substitute to Committee Sub-Editor after 3 March 1986 if the Committee Sub-Editor concerned has not returned from unpaid leave. The creation of additional posts at Committee Sub-Editor level, which would be filled by promotion from among the Reporters, is currently under discussion.

Mr. McWilliam asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *395*, he will list the names of the 10 *Hansard* Reporters stated as being in post on 10 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Beith: The names of the 10 *Hansard* Reporters stated as being in post on 10 February 1986 were:

Mrs. P. Pratt*
Miss V. Widgery
S. M. Hutchinson
Miss C. Fogarty
Mrs. J. Ballard†
Miss H. J. G. Thompson
Miss M. Babington
Miss C. G. Black‡
P. Oglethorpe‡
Miss C. Hanly‡

Notes:

*Mrs. Pratt is on substitution to Committee Sub-Editor to cover a member of staff on unpaid leave.

†Mrs. Ballard is on maternity leave until 24 March 1986.

‡These Trainee Reporters have completed their two-year training period and are awaiting confirmation as Reporters.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

14. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Paymaster General how many men between the ages of 50 and 59 years have been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years, respectively.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January the numbers of unemployed men in the United Kingdom between the ages of 50 and 59 who have been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years was 238,700; 172,400 and 122,600 respectively.

19. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Paymaster General how many people are unemployed now; and how many were unemployed in May 1979.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants, seasonally adjusted excluding school-leavers, in the United Kingdom was 3,204,900. The corresponding number for May 1979 was 1,184,100.

26. **Mr. Alan Howarth** asked the Paymaster General how many people are now recorded as being in work; and what was the comparable figure three years ago.

Mr. Lang: In September 1985 (latest date for which figures are available) there were 23,724,000 people in the employed labour force in Great Britain. In September 1982 there were 23,215,000. The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self-employed and Her Majesty's Forces.

36. **Mr. Knox** asked the Paymaster General how many people were out of work in the Staffordshire, Moorlands parliamentary constituency at the most recent count; and what was the comparable figure for the same month in 1973.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986. The number of unemployed claimants in the Staffordshire, Moorlands

constituency was 3,768. Statistics of unemployment for parliamentary constituencies are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

38. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Paymaster General if he will state the current level of unemployment.

65. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Paymaster General what is the present number of people who are unemployed.

79. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

80. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

88. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current level of unemployment.

119. **Mr. Latham** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the latest level of unemployment.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,407,729.

44. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Paymaster General how many men aged over 50 years have been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years, respectively.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986 there were 256,669 male claimants aged 50 years or over in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for more than 12 months, 181,139 for more than two years, and 128,670 for more than three years.

53. **Mr. Randall** asked the Paymaster General how many people had been unemployed for more than 12 months in May 1979; and how many people have been unemployed for more than 12 months to the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: On 5 April 1979 (figures for May 1979 are not available) the number of unemployed registrants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for more than 12 months was 366,711. The corresponding number of unemployed claimants as at 9 January 1986 was 1,371,632. The figures for April 1979 and January 1986 are not strictly comparable because of changes in the way the figures are collected.

56. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Paymaster General how many people have been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years and three years, respectively.

Mr. Trippier: On 9 January 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for more than 12 months, two years, and three years was 1,371,632, 844,106, and 555,920, respectively.

60. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General if he will discontinue the practice of adding to official statistics of employees in employment equivalents made up of part-time employees, listing these later statistics separately and indicating those who work both part-time and full-time.

Mr. Lang: The Department's published employees in employment estimates separately identify part time male and female employees for census of employment dates; most recently for September 1981. For other dates only part time female employees are separately identified but regular separate estimates for part time male employees will be introduced, retrospectively to September 1984, later this year when the results of the 1984 census of employment are available.

70. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Paymaster General what has been the overall unemployment trend over the last 12 months.

Mr. Lang: The seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in the United Kingdom, excluding school leavers, increased by an average 7,000 per month during the 12 months to January 1986.

71. **Mr. Skinner** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of the work force was unemployed in May 1979; and what is the proportion unemployed at the present time.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986 the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate, excluding school leavers, was 13·2 per cent. in the United Kingdom. The corresponding unemployment rate for May 1979 was 4·9 per cent.

75. **Mr. Barron** asked the Paymaster General what is the current number of unemployed in the Rother Valley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the Rother Valley constituency was 6,449.

89. **Mr. Strang** asked the Paymaster General how many men have been unemployed for more than 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the number of male claimants in the United Kingdom who had been unemployed for more than 12 months was 1,043,981.

94. **Mr. Alton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the unemployment situation on Merseyside.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the Merseyside metropolitan county was 142,696, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 21·5 per cent.

112. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently unemployed; and what this is as a percentage of the work force.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,407,729, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 14·1 per cent.

115. **Mr. Stott** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the current trends in unemployment.

Mr. Lang: The seasonally adjusted level of unemployment in the United Kingdom, excluding school leavers, flattened out over the second half of 1985. Given the monthly variations on the series, it is too soon to conclude that rises over the past two months signal a resuming upward trend.

Mr. Irving asked the Paymaster General if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of *(a)* employed persons and *(b)* self-employed persons in the Cheltenham area in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lang: The precise information requested is not available.

Information about the numbers of employees employed in local areas can be provided for only those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The available information relating to employees in employment in the jobcentre area of Cheltenham is as follows:

Employees in Employment: Cheltenham Jobcentre Area

Date	*Number*
June 1971	49,200
June 1972	50,500
June 1973	55,100
June 1974	60,300
June 1975	60,800
June 1976	60,200
June 1977	61,400
June 1978	62,800
September 1981	65,900

Information about the numbers self-employed in local areas is obtained from the censuses of population. The 1971 census identified 2,380 self-employed persons living in the then municipal borough of Cheltenham. The 1981 census counted 3,089 self-employed persons in the larger, current district of Cheltenham.

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General what are the latest unemployment figures and the appropriate percentage rate for the Winchester and Eastleigh travel-to-work area; and if he will list in the *Official Report* any travel-to-work areas which have lower unemployment percentages.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 9 January 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the Winchester and Eastleigh travel-to-work area was 4,049, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 5·5 per cent. This is the lowest rate of unemployment in any travel-to-work area in the United Kingdom.

Careers Service

15. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the resources available to the Careers Service.

Mr. Trippier: It is for education authorities to decide the level of resources for their careers services. Adequate support for their expenditure is provided from central government sources.

School Leavers

16. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Paymaster General what were the numbers of school leavers who are engaged on training courses provided by *(a)* industry and commerce, *(b)* local government and *(c)* the YTS during 1985.

Mr. Trippier: In 1985 there were over 400,000 entrants to YTS throughout Great Britain, and most of them joined schemes run by industry, commerce and local government. Information is not held on the numbers of school leavers participating in other training courses provided by industry, commerce and local government.

Youth Wages

17. **Mr. Martin** asked the Paymaster General what has been the change in youth wages relative to adult wages since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Between April 1979 and April 1985 the average earnings of boys relative to men and of girls relative to women fell by 10 per cent. and 11 per cent. respectively.

Youth Training Scheme

18. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the funding for the second year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: The Government are increasing their funding of YTS from the current £850 million to £970 million in 1986-87, rising to more than £1·25 billion in 1988-89, to allow the expansion of YTS into a two-year scheme. We are therefore making a substantial and increasing contribution to the scheme. We also expect employers generally to make a higher contribution in future, in recognition of the better trained work force that YTS will produce.

20. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Paymaster General if he intends to increase the resources available to the Manpower Services Commission for the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: Resources will increase from the current level of some £850 million a year to £970 million in 1986-87 and to more than £1·25 billion in 1988-89.

30. **Mr. Whitfield** asked the Paymaster General if he will estimate the number of trainees on the YTS who could be assisted to set up their own businesses.

Mr. Trippier: I hope a significant number will be helped to do so. There are already a number of development projects introducing YTS trainees to the world of enterprise and small business. However, there is clearly scope for considerable expansion both of general business awareness training and of specific training for selected young people who wish to set up in business.

33. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the support given to YTS leavers in getting jobs.

101. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the support given to YTS leavers in getting jobs.

107. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the support given to YTS leavers in getting jobs.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission aims to ensure that the training available through YTS enables young people to acquire skills that are relevant to the labour market. This is the most effective means of ensuring that young people leaving YTS are well placed to move into jobs. The Commission also requires that those running schemes provide guidance for trainees in making the transition to work. Including how to find and apply for job vacancies and coaching in job interview skills. In addition, guidance and help is available from careers offices and jobcentres.

40. **Mr. Pike** asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the cost of the first full year of operation of the two-year YTS expressed in constant 1983 prices.

Mr. Trippier: We expect that two-year YTS will build up over the next two to three years, and the spending we have allocated will build up accordingly. By 1988-89 it will amount to over £1 billion at constant 1983-84 prices.

46. **Mrs. Currie** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the recently launched two-year YTS.

100. **Mr. Haselhurst** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about the implementation of a two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: From 1 April 1986 YTS will offer two years of vocational and work-based training for 16-year-old school leavers and one year for 17-year-olds. All entrants will have the opportunity of obtaining recognised vocational qualifications. The new expanded YTS will be a permanent part of the training scene in this country. It will be a partnership between Government, industry and trainers with the aim of producing the better qualified young workforce that industry needs.

48. **Mr. Welsh** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to change the voluntary character of YTS.

Mr. Trippier: No.

63. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about premium places on the two-year YTS.

68. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about premium places on the two-year YTS.

77. **Mr. Ron Brown** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement about premium places on the two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: Premium places have been introduced in recognition of the extra costs faced by providers of training programmes for young people with special training needs and to ensure provision in areas where sufficient employer-based places may not be available. Around 51,000 premium places will be available for entrants to YTS in 1986-87. I am confident that this level of provision will ensure that high quality places will be available to meet the needs of all eligible young people.

66. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Paymaster General how many people have completed the YTS in Leicester and the east midlands to date; and, of those, what percentage of young people found work following the successful completion of these schemes in Leicester and the east midlands; and how many young people are still in training.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of young people some three months after they leave YTS. The latest survey results, which cover young people who left YTS between 1 April and 30 August 1985, are given below:

	Leicester Local Authority District	*East Midlands*
Number of YTS 'completers'	968	11,466
Percentage who found work	81	72

The latest figures available show that, at the end of December 1985, there were 2,417 young people in training in Leicester local authority district and 22,830 in the east midlands.

69. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Paymaster General how many persons currently training in the YTS are now expected to continue for a second year; and what proportion of current trainees this represents.

Mr. Trippier: At the end of December 1985, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 293,268 young people in training on YTS; not all these would, however, be eligible for a second year since this would be available only to trainees who complete their first year of training during 1986-87.

It is expected that around 100,000 trainees will be offered a second year of training in 1986-87. This represents 34 per cent. of current trainees.

74. **Mr. Sheerman** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the two-year YTS.

91. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the two-year YTS.

113. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: I frequently discuss the progress and development of YTS with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission.

76. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General how many 1985 school leavers are still waiting for a place on YTS.

Mr. Trippier: I regret the information is not available in the precise form requested. However I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) on 15 January, at column 567.

86. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to increase the sum paid to second year members of the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: No. The minimum allowance of £35 per week for second year trainees has only just been set, and applies from 1 April 1986.

98. **Mr. Michie** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of YTS leavers enter paid jobs within three months *(a)* in the north of England and *(b)* in the south of England.

Mr. Trippier: The 100 per cent. follow-up of YTS leavers during the period 1 April to 30 August 1985 shows the percentage of leavers who entered paid jobs within three months in the English regions as follows:

Manpower Services Commission

Region	*Per cent. entering paid jobs*
Northern	46·8
North West	56·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	57·7
Midlands	61·2
South West	68·8
South East	73·6
London	66·7

The April to August period may not be representative of the results for a full year.

110. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received on the voluntary character of the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: I have not recently received any representations on this subject. Participation in YTS is voluntary and we have no plans to change this.

111. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in promoting the YTS.

116. **Mr. Leadbitter** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in promoting the YTS.

Mr. Trippier: On 27 January my right hon. and noble Friend together with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission. The Director General of the CBI and the General Secretary of the TUC launched an advertising campaign to promote the new two-year YTS. The campaign will be supplemented with other promotional material including videos and booklets.

Graduates

21. **Mr. Rost** asked the Paymaster General whether he will make a statement on the employment prospects for graduates.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: For the fourth year in succession the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services and the Standing Conference of Employers of Graduates report an increase in the number of vacancies available for people graduating later this year. More employers are seeking to recruit graduates, many of them smaller and medium-sized companies. Job prospects for graduates entering the labour market in 1986 are therefore good, especially if they are prepared to be flexible and mobile.

Inner City Areas

22. **Mr. Soley** asked the Paymaster General if he has any new plans to seek to reduce long term male unemployment in inner city areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The community programme, which provides employment for the long term unemployed, continues to expand towards its target of 230,000 places by June. My right hon. and learned Friend made a statement on 6 February about new help the Government are directing to inner city areas.

31. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Paymaster General what new initiatives will be undertaken in the drive to fight unemployment in the inner cities.

Mr. Lang: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement my right hon. and learned Friend made on 6 February about new help for inner city areas.

Unemployed Persons (New Homes)

23. **Mr. Holt** asked the Paymaster General, under the Manpower Services Commission's employment transfer scheme, how many unemployed people have been given financial assistance towards the whole or part of a deposit on a new home.

Mr. Lang: The employment transfer scheme pays a transfer grant, which is intended to help with the incidental expenses of moving to a new area and may be used, among other things, as a contribution to the deposit on a house. Since 7 May 1985, 1,380 people have received such a transfer grant but it is not known what percentage have used the grant for the deposit for the purchase of a house. In addition, direct assistance is given with the legal costs of buying a house in appropriate cases.

West Yorkshire

24. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Paymaster General what are the current levels of unemployment in west Yorkshire in absolute terms, and as a percentage of the total work force.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the West Yorkshire metropolitan county was 127,593; which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 14·5 per cent.

London

25. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Paymaster General what additional measures he intends to take to reduce unemployment in London.

Mr. Lang: As my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 12 November, London will benefit from the extension of the enterprise allowance scheme, which is currently helping over 5,000 people in London to set up in business, and Ealing is one of the pilot areas for the job start scheme—our new initiative to help the long-term unemployed back into work. London has been allocated nearly £54 million of urban programme aid in 1986-87, and the London city action team co-ordinates and targets Government efforts in the London inner city partnership area. In addition, my right hon. and learned Friend announced on 6 February that we are establishing small task forces in Notting Hill and North Peckham as a further step to improve the targeting and enhance the benefits of Government aid to local people.

We will continue to provide practical help to the unemployed through our employment and training measures such as the community programme, which is currently benefiting over 12,000 long-term unemployed people in London, and the YTS which is to be extended to two years from 1 April. However, the main impact on unemployment must come from employers and those who decide to work for themselves. It is their drive towards competitiveness, profitability and keeping costs down that will provide new jobs in London and elsewhere.

Special Measures

27. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Paymaster General when he expects to reply to the report of the Employment Committee on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

78. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his policy towards employment creation in the light of the recommendations contained in the recent report of the Employment Committee.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) earlier today.

Pilot Schemes

28. **Mr. Favell** asked the Paymaster General what pilot schemes to asist the long-term unemployed are now being conducted.

Mr. Lang: At present in addition to existing services the Manpower Services Commission is conducting the following initiatives to help long-term unemployed people.

—contacting some longer term unemployed people to provide the range of services available to them from Jobcentres.
—operating over 30 job clubs.
—in nine pilot areas providing a programme of counselling interviews and the job start scheme.

Details of these schemes were given in my predecessor's reply to my hon. Friend on 21 January at column 124.

Basildon

29. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General how many YTS places have been taken up by youngsters in Basildon over the last three years; and how many places have been allocated for the two-year scheme.

Mr. Trippier: There have been 3,176 entrants to YTS in the Basildon local authority district in the period between the inception of YTS in April 1983 and the end of December 1985. This figure includes some young people who have entered YTS more than once.

No allocation of places at local authority district level has yet been made for two year YTS.

European Community Ministers

32. **Mr. Evans** asked the Paymaster General when he last met his EEC counterparts; and what they discussed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I held useful discussions with my colleagues from the Community both yesterday and earlier today at the informal meeting of Employment Ministers in the Hague. We discussed the employment situation in the Community and also the position of women in the labour market.

Wages Councils

34. **Mr. Bob Edwards** asked the Paymaster General what is the Government's estimate of the number of new jobs likely to be created by removing young people from the protection of wages councils; and on what evidence it is based.

50. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General how many full-time jobs he expects to be created for people under the age of 21 years as a result of the reform of the wages councils.

83. **Mr. Terry Fields** asked the Paymaster General how many full-time jobs for men he expects to be created as a result of the reform of the wages councils.

103. **Mr. George** asked the Paymaster General how many full-time jobs he expects to be created as a result of the reform of wages councils.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: There is clear evidence in studies both in the United Kingdom and internationally of the link between pay and jobs. In my opinion it is not possible, however, to quantify precisely the number of new jobs that will arise from the reforms to wages councils. There are a large number of academic studies which have suggested various figures for the increased employment that would be generated by reform or abolition.

54. **Mr. Bell** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of young workers find their first job in wages council industries.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The only available figures are those from the new entrants to employment survey which related to the employment destinations of those leaving school at age 16 in 1983. Of those entering employment that year outside YTS some 30 per cent. found their first job in wages council industries.

Small Firms

35. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Paymaster General what training he intends to introduce to encourage the development of small firms.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission's adult training programmes currently include a range of measures which encourage the development of small firms. The Commission has been asked to refocus these programmes to give greater emphasis to small firms and enterprise because of the special need to stimulate these activities. In 1985-86 the training for enterprise programme, which is the principal small firms programme, cost £13·6 million and in 1986-87 expenditure on it will rise to £18·3 million. This additional expenditure is part of an overall switch of £20 million towards small firms, within the total adult training programme budget of £259 million, as a result of refocusing in 1986-87. The Manpower Services Commission will review this autumn the scope for further action.

I am anxious to see development in training systems, such as open learning and computer based training packages, since they may open up more accessible training for small business men than conventional training courses. I have also asked MSC to develop proposals to encourage more enterprise allowance scheme recipients to take advantage of training opportunities.

117. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Paymaster General what progress has been made in reducing bureaucratic burdens on small firms.

Mr. Trippier: The Government have made considerable progress in following up the proposals in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden" to reduce the administrative requirements on business and particularly small firms. We intend to produce a second White Paper reporting progress and making further proposals on deregulation later this year.

Conference Industry

37. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Paymaster General what financial assistance has been given by the Government to the United Kingdom conference industry for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Government recognise that the conference sector is an important element of the tourism

market and assist the sector through the funds made available to the British tourist authority and the national tourist boards for England, Scotland and Wales.

Since 1979 to date the English tourist board has given the following assistance to conference centre developments under section 4 of the Development of Tourism Act 1969.

Year	Number of centres	Amount £
1979-80	2	365,000
1980-81	—	—
1981-82	1	33,400
1982-83	2	225,000
1983-84	3	100,750
1984-85	5	236,750
1985-86	1	19,500
Total	14	980,400

The figures for the Welsh tourist board (which is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales) are as follows:

Year	Number of centres	Amount £
1979-80	—	—
1980-81	1	150,000
1981-82	—	—
1982-83	1	100,000
1983-84	—	—
1984-85	1	69,186
1985-86	—	—
Total	3	319,186

Comparable figures are not available from the Scottish and Northern Ireland tourist boards which are the responsibility respectively of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

In addition all five statutory tourist boards promote the conference industry through their general marketing activities but the amount of this assistance is not separately quantifiable in all cases.

Conference centre facilities can be assisted under certain other schemes operated by the Department of the Environment and the territorial departments where they satisfy the necessary criteria.

Tied Accommodation

39. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his policy towards security of accommodation tied to a job.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The provision of accommodation tied to a job outside agriculture is, like most other terms and conditions of employment, generally a matter for agreement between employers and employees, either individually or collectively, without Government intervention.

Tourism

41. **Mr. Bevan** asked the Paymaster General if the review of section 4 grants for tourism has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on 21 January at column *126*.

Long-term Unemployment

42. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Paymaster General if he has any new plans to reduce long-term unemployment.

85. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Paymaster General if he has any new initiatives aimed at reducing long-term unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my predecessor's reply to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) on 21 January at column *123*, and to my right hon. and learned Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) earlier today.

Corporate Pensioners

43. **Mr. Stern** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to seek to amend employment law to provide for representatives of corporate pensioners to have negotiating rights with their former employers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: No. This is a matter for the parties concerned.

Textile and Clothing Industries

45. **Mr. Madden** asked the Paymaster General how many people are now employed in the United Kingdom textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Lang: In September 1985 (the latest date for which figures are available) there were 464,000 people employed in the textiles (including man-made fibres) and clothing industries in Great Britain.

Figures for the United Kingdom are not available.

72. **Mr. Straw** asked the Paymaster General how many people now registered as unemployed were last employed in the textile and clothing industries.

Mr. Lang: Information on the previous occupations of the unemployed has not been available from the monthly count since October 1982. The results of the 1984 labour force survey indicate that in Great Britain in the second quarter of 1984 there were 69,000 people without a job and looking for work who had last been employed in the textile, footwear and clothing industries in the past three years.

Community Programme

47. **Mr. Beith** asked the Paymaster General whether he has any plans to allow unemployed persons not in receipt of benefit to take up places on community programme schemes.

Mr. Lang: We have no present plans to change the criteria for entry to the community programme which give priority to those long-term unemployed people who are directly or indirectly in receipt of state benefits. Exceptions are allowed for managers, supervisors and other key workers with skills essential for the successful operation of a project and for whom no suitably qualified replacement is available for the priority group.

52. **Mr. Geraint Howells** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the funding available for the community programme.

Mr. Lang: The Government are providing significant resources for the community programme amounting to

some £700 million in 1985-86 and £1 billion in 1986-87. This should enable 300,000 people to benefit from the programme in a full year.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

49. **Mr. Woodcock** asked the Paymaster General how many businesses have been set up under the enterprise allowance scheme so far.

Mr. Trippier: Up to 31 December 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, 120,937 people have joined the enterprise allowance scheme. The number of individual businesses is lower than this because some of the businesses are partnerships, co-operatives or limited companies involving more than one enterprise allowance recipient.

Mr. Hirst asked the Paymaster General how many places have been created under the enterprise allowance scheme; at what cost to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: At 31 December 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, 120,937 people had joined the enterprise allowance scheme; expenditure up to that date was £180·271 million. There will be 80,000 places available on the scheme in 1986-87.

62. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Paymaster General how many people have benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme in the northern region.

Mr. Trippier: The total number of entrants to the enterprise allowance scheme in the Northern Region between 1 August 1983, when the scheme was launched nationally, and 31 December 1985, the latest available date for which figures are available, is 6,543.

106. **Mr. Trotter** asked the Paymaster General if he will make more training available to enterprise allowance scheme applicants.

Mr. Trippier: Both private and public sector training, including the full range of provision under the Manpower Services Commission's training of enterprise programme, is available to applicants. The Manpower Services Commission was asked to take particular account of enterprise allowance scheme participants in refocusing its adult training more sharply on the needs of small firms and on promoting enterprise and self-employment. We are currently looking at ways of encouraging more participants on the scheme to take up the training opportunities available.

Small Businesses

51. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Paymaster General what has been the net change in the number of small businesses over each of the last three years.

Mr. Trippier: The estimated net increases in the number of businesses registered for VAT in 1982, 1983 and 1984 are 20,259, 34,936 and 36,420 respectively. As more information becomes available, an estimate for 1985 will be prepared and the estimates for previous years revised.

Manufacturing Industries

55. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss employment prospects in the manufacturing industries.

Mr. Trippier: My right hon. and noble Friend and I meet the Confederation of British Industry frequently to discuss a wide range of issues. In the improved economic climate our policies are creating, output, investment and exports in the manufacturing industry are rising, while the decline in manufacturing employment which we have experienced in common with all Western industrialised nations has eased considerably since 1983.

95. **Mr. Madel** asked the Paymaster General what is the current level of average wage increases in the manufacturing industry.

Mr. Lang: The percentage increase in the index of average manufacturing earnings for the year to November 1985 is shown in table 5·1 of labour market data in *Employment Gazette* for January 1986, a copy of which is in the Library.

Sunderland

58. **Mr. Clay** asked the Paymaster General what steps the Government plan to take to alleviate the unemployment situation in Sunderland.

Mr. Lang: The creation of jobs in Sunderland will depend primarily on the attractiveness of the area to potential investors and the competitiveness of local industry. There is already an extensive range of Government assistance to attract new investments and new jobs to the area. In addition the area benefits from our wide range of employment and training measures, and new initiatives to help the long-term unemployed and job creation in the small firms and tourism sectors.

West Midlands

59. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently unemployed in the west midlands; and how this compares with 12 months ago.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the west midlands region was 356,316. The corresponding figure for January 1985 was 357,111.

Hotel Accommodation

61. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Paymaster General if the latest review of hotel accommodation has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The English tourist board and British tourist authority (who commissioned the current review of London hotel accommodation jointly with other sponsors) have now received the final report and are considering its findings. I hope to receive a copy of the report from the boards as soon as their consideration is complete.

Training Courses

64. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to increase the present payment of £125 to employers who wish to send work people on training courses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: There are no plans to increase the £25 per person per day (up to a maximum of £1,000 per person) payable under the local training grants to employers scheme.

The discretionary grant is not intended to meet the full costs of training but to provide a worthwhile contribution to those employers awarded grants. Early evaluation of the scheme by the Manpower Services Commission shows that it effectively meets this aim. The scheme has proved very popular with employers. In 1985-86, over 2,900 firms have started their approved training programmes, which will help around 30,000 employees considerably more than was anticipated.

Local Enterprise Agencies

67. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Paymaster General how many applications have been made by local enterprise agencies for funding from his Department.

Mr. Trippier: No applications have been received from local enterprise agencies for funding under the new local enterprise agency grant scheme which comes into operation on 1 April 1986. However, 78 local enterprise agencies have been, or are currently being given, modest financial support under the existing pump-priming scheme run by my Department; this scheme introduced in February 1983 will cease on the introduction of the new grant scheme.

Knitwear Industry

73. **Sir John Farr** asked the Paymaster General what is the change of numbers of persons employed in the knitwear industry over the past five years.

Mr. Lang: Between September 1980 and September 1985 (the latest date for which quarterly figures are available) the number of employees in employment in the hosiery and other knitted goods industry in Great Britain decreased by 14,300.

Wage Levels

81. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Paymaster General what change has taken place in the level of wages of the lowest paid 20 per cent. of workers since 1979; and how this compares with the inflation rate over the same period.

Mr. Lang: Between April 1979 and April 1985, results from the New Earnings Survey indicate the level of earnings below which the gross weekly earnings of 20 per cent. of full-time male adult employees pay, increased by 79 per cent. For full-time female adult employees the increase was 86 per cent. Over the same period the retail prices index increased by 75 per cent.

114. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Paymaster General what is the lowest and highest average wage provided for young workers under current wages council orders.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: For workers other than adults, the highest and lowest average minimum hourly rates currently laid down by wages councils are £1·61·5 by the laundry wages council and £1·00 by the hairdressing wages council, respectively. In each case, the figure given is the average of all the rates applicable to non-adult workers.

96. **Mr. Lofthouse** asked the Paymaster General if he expects wage rates for adults to increase or decrease as a result of the reform of the wages councils.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The eventual effect of the reform on pay levels will depend on a variety of factors including the way in which employers and workers settle pay matters no longer governed by wages orders, and the level of the minima set by the councils in the light of their new responsibilities. The reforms will introduce much greater flexibility in pay setting and more variation in pay structures between different businesses but it is not possible to make firm forecasts of the overall effect.

Job Opportunities

82. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the Government's estimate of newly created job opportunities is based on statistical projections; and how accurate such projections have been since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The latest available estimates of the size of the employed labour force (which includes employees in employment, the self employed and armed forces) are for September 1985. Estimates for dates after mid-1984 include assumptions that

(a) Self employment is increasing at the rate observed between 1981 and 1984, and

(b) The undercounting in employees in employment estimates derived using sample survey data from employers is continuing to accumulate at the rate which Labour Force Survey data suggest occurred between 1983 and 1984.

These assumptions amount to 384,000 between June 1984 and September 1985; this is equivalent to 54 per cent. of the estimated increase of 709,000 (seasonally adjusted) in the employed labour force since the increasing employment trend began in March 1983.

The additions arising from these two assumptions are reassessed as each new year's labour force survey data become available. The revision which will be made later this year will take into account not only information from the 1985 labour force survey but also the results of the 1984 census of employment which will provide final employees in employment figures for September 1984 and hence for the period 1981 to 1984. Pending the availability of these further data a preliminary assessment of the accuracy of the assumptions can be made from the nature of the revisions that have been made as additional labour force survey data have become available. For example, the additions initially incorporated in the employed labour force estimates for 1981 to 1983, on the basis of the 1978 and 1981 census of employment results and the 1979 and 1981 labour force survey data, amounted to 65,000 a quarter; the equivalent current estimate for this period, using in addition the 1983 labour force survey data but pending the 1984 census results, is 46,800 a quarter. The same addition of 65,000 a quarter was initially used for the early part of 1983-84 but was revised for this period to 76,100 using the first results of the 1983 labour force survey and then, using the 1984, and revised 1983, labour force survey data, to 113,800. This figure consists of the quarterly growth of 68,300 in self employment as measured by the labour force survey, and an undercounting adjustment of 45,500 a quarter to the employees in employment estimates which is subject to revision when the 1984 census of employment results are available.

For periods since mid-1984 the current assumptions are that self employment is increasing by 31,300 a quarter (the average rate observed between 1981 and 1984) and that the undercounting in the employee estimates from sample survey data from employers is accumulting at 45,500 a quarter.

Sterling Metals Ltd.

84. **Mr. Neillist** asked the Paymaster General what unemployment consequences have been notified to his Department arising from the announced closure of Sterling Metals Ltd., Nuneaton; and what action his Department intends to take to seek to alleviate the situation.

Mr. Lang: None. In the event of job losses at Sterling Metals Ltd. at Nuneaton, all the facilities of the Manpower Services Commission will be made available to help those workers made redundant find alternative employment or train for new jobs.

Disabled School Leavers

87. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Paymaster General what action he is taking to seek to reduce the unemployment of disabled school leavers.

Mr. Lang: Disabled school leavers have access to specialist careers officers within the local education authority careers service to help them find suitable training and employment. The careers services liaises closely with the specialist disablement resettlement officers based in local jobcentres, who can advise on the range of Government schemes run by the Manpower Services Commission to help disabled people overcome particular difficulties they may face in finding and keeping employment.

Two year YTS affords premium places for trainees with special needs and to provide opportunities in areas where insufficient training places are available. YTS will also provide an additional grant to fund places for the severely disabled; money to finance special assistance and adaptations; initial assessment courses and there are special eligibility concessions for the disabled and disadvantaged.

Lost Working Days

90. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Paymaster General how many working days have been lost in industrial disputes over the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The number of working days lost through stoppages of work due to industrial disputes during 1985, the latest 12 months available, is provisionally estimated as 6·3 million.

Tin Mining Industry

92. **Mr. Penhaligon** asked the Paymaster General if he has made any study of the implications for employment in Cornwall of the present position of the tin mining industry.

Mr. Lang: The Department has not recently undertaken any special study of employment in Cornwall. In 1979 a study of employment in west Cornwall revealed the historic decline of employment in the tin industry there, and noted that the level of employment would always be vulnerable to market price fluctuations. The current crisis is clearly a matter of concern, but it is not possible to assess the commercial prospects of the mining companies at present, nor therefore the medium and longer-term employment prospects in the tin industry.

Careers Offices

93. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Paymaster General how many full-time vacancies were available at careers offices in England and Wales at the latest available dates.

Mr. Trippier: On 8 November 1985. The latest date for which separate figures for full-time vacancies are available. There were 10,098 full-time vacancies at careers offices in England and Wales.

Tourism (Grants)

97. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General when he hopes to complete his review of the section 4 grants for tourism.

Mr. Trippier: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply on 21 January at column 126.

Small Firms Loan Guarantee Scheme

99. **Mr. Hancock** asked the Paymaster General what has been the estimated number of jobs created to date by the small firms loan guarantee scheme; and whether he plans to extend the length of the scheme.

Mr. Trippier: Information from sample surveys suggests that loan guarantees authorised up to 31 May 1984 assisted the creation of about 44,500 jobs. The procedure for calculating the numbers of jobs created is currently under review as part of the current consideration of the future of the scheme. No decision has yet been reached on a further extension of the scheme.

"Lifting the Burden"

Mr. Carttiss asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on progress in implementation of the proposals contained in the White Paper, "Lifting the Burden."

Mr. Trippier: Good progress has been made in following up the proposals contained in the White Paper "Lifting the Burden". Steps taken so far to reduce he burdens on business include the extension to two years of the qualifying period for access to an industrial tribunal in unfair dismissal cases; the introduction of new simplified building regulations; the publication of proposals for a review of the Use Classes Order; and proposals for amending legislation on wages councils and women's hours of work.

My right hon. and noble Friend has announced the Government's intention to publish a second White Paper on deregulation in the first half of this year.

Adult Training

104. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on progress in developing adult training strategies.

Mr. Trippier: Under the adult training strategy, which we announced in January 1984, a wide range of measures have been introduced to improve the operation of the

training market. In the key area of developing greater co-ordination and responsiveness at local level over 200 local collaborative projects have been launched, involving some 1,800 employers and training providers working in partnership.

Direct funding of adult training through the Manpower Services Commission has been concentrated on two new programmes — the job training programme, providing skills which are in known demand, and the wider opportunities training programme, helping unemployed people to sharpen their skills. Particular emphasis will now be given to the needs of small firms, to promoting enterprise and to exploiting the advantages of open learning.

The adult training campaign, which raises awareness about the benefits of training and the means for taking action on training, will be concentrating on small firms and their support agencies between April and September 1986.

Jobcentre, Newcastle upon Tyne

105. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement in respect of the provision of a jobcentre in the Shields road area, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Mr. Lang: The Shields road jobcentre Portakabin premises have been abandoned following substantial damage by fire. The staff are sharing premises with colleagues at Wallsend jobcentre until alternative premises can be found for them in Byker. Negotiations to obtain new premises are proceeding.

Students (Temporary Work)

108. **Mr. Freud** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received concerning the availability of temporary work for students; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have not received any recent representations on this subject.

Unemployment Information Campaign

109. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Paymaster General if his Department proposes to engage an advertising agency concerned with an unemployment information campaign; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department is considering a publicity campaign with the aim of encouraging take up of the various schemes and services concerned with employment, training and enterprise. Many of these could give considerable help to unemployed people. We are concerned that many people and employers are either unaware of the range of options open to them in the labour market or are uncertain how and where to seek advice.

Following a competition for advertising proposals, Davidson Pearce plc was selected to work on the new campaign. Davidson Pearce plc already has a number of advertising accounts with my Department.

Unemployment Benefit Offices and Jobcentres

118. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Paymaster General whether he is satisfied with the arrangements for co-ordination between unemployment benefit offices and jobcentres.

Mr. Lang: We are exploring ways of increasing co-operation between benefit offices and jobcentres, to ensure that unemployed people are helped to take advantage of job vacancies and other services. To strengthen links, a number of projects are under way to provide a range of information and advice in benefit offices. In addition, the two sets of offices are co-operating closely on pilot schemes to provide in depth interviews at jobcentres for people who have been unemployed for more than a year.

Tourism (Promotional Policy)

120. **Mr. Gale** asked the Paymaster General what promotional policy has been agreed as a result of meetings he has had with the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board.

Mr. Trippier: The Boards have submitted proposals for increased expenditure in 1986-87 taking account of the Government's wish that additional emphasis should be placed on promoting areas of the country which could attract more tourists and where unemployment is high. These proposals are still under consideration. An announcement about the boards' new programmes will be made in due course.

Business Start-ups

Mr. Irving asked the Paymaster General what has been the number of new business start-ups in the Cheltenham area in each of the last six years; how much public money has been used to assist in addition; and how many of these businesses have failed.

Mr. Trippier: Detailed information of this nature is not kept for the Cheltenham travel-to-work area.

Eastleigh Railway Workshops

Sir David Price asked the Paymaster General what will be the consequential increase in unemployment arising from the announced policy decision of British Rail Engineering Limited to remove all heavy repair work from the Eastleigh railway workshops; and what steps he proposes taking to counter that increase.

Mr. Lang: I understand that the British Railways Board has announced a restructuring of British Rail Engineering Limited into two distinct business groups from April 1986, with the Eastleigh works forming part of the British Rail maintenance group. The board has announced only the principles underlying its decision and will be working out the detailed implications for work load and employment over the next few months. All the facilities of the Manpower Services Commission will be made available to help any worker made redundant find alternative employment or train for a new job.

Wages Scheme

Mr. Greenway asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the progress of the experimental scheme to top up by £20 per week wages paid to employees who have been out of work for a year or more.

Mr. Lang: The pilot job start scheme has been running since 6 January in nine areas of the country. It is thus still too early to make a detailed assessment of how the scheme

is working, although we are monitoring it closely, to decide whether to extend it more widely. At 14 February, 53 applications for the allowance had been accepted.

Apprenticeships

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General if he will give figures for *(a)* Stoke on Trent, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* the United Kingdom showing the percentage change between 1979 and the most recent year for which figures are available for the number of young people starting apprenticeships.

Mr. Trippier: Information is not available in the form requested. The number of 16-year-old school leavers starting apprenticeships in England and Wales, including long term trainees on YTS, fell by 32 per cent. between 1979 and 1983. Comparable figures are not available for Stoke-on-Trent or for the west midlands.

The numbers entering traditional apprenticeships are becoming increasingly irrelevant as a measure of the real level of skills training being undertaken as industry's skill needs change. For many industries, including the expanding new technology sector, apprenticeship is not the usual means of achieving full skills status. YTS already enables a substantial amount of initial skills training to be carried out, and the expanded two-year scheme will provide increased opportunity for flexible skills training relevant to employers' needs.

TRANSPORT

Railway Grants (Faversham)

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of grants made to industry in the Faversham constituency for the improvement of rail freight facilities since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

Company	*Date of grant offer*	*Amount of grant* £
Shipbreaking Ltd. Queenborough, Isle of Sheppey	13.6.1979	112,000
*Pre-Delivery Inspection Ltd. Queenborough, Isle of Sheppey	28.10.1983	66,000
Sheerness Steel Co. Ltd. Isle of Sheppey	19.9.1985	135,000

* Offer not taken up by the company—project deferred.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy towards maximum lorry weights of the decision to proceed with a fixed Channel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: Government policy on maximum lorry weights remained unchanged. Maximum lorry weights in European Community countries are governed by a directive agreed in December 1984, from which the United Kingdom has a derogation allowing us to retain our domestic maximum weight limit of 38 tonnes. This derogation can only be ended by unanimous agreement in the Council of Ministers. We shall continue to carry out checks on incoming vehicles to ensure that they comply with our domestic requirements.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport what preliminary estimates he has received from British Rail as to the cost of altering the loading gauge on the lines to the proposed Channel tunnel to permit containers to be conveyed by rail from other parts of the United Kingdom; and what indication he has received regarding the proposed timetable and the number of bridge alterations and other major works likely to be involved in such a programme.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail has estimated it will need to spend some £3 million on works for clearances for CFL container traffic. This work would be confined to the line between Tonbridge and Redhill, and British Rail at present expects it to be carried out between 1988 and 1991. It is for British Rail to develop detailed proposals.

M2 (Widening)

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the studies which have been undertaken into the possible widening of the M2; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect the report on the study of the possible need for more capacity on the M2 between junctions 1 and 3 to be completed this summer. It is not our practice to publish such reports because of the blighting of property and general uncertainty which could be caused. If the results of the M2 study justify including a scheme in the road programme, it will be subject to the usual detailed investigations before proposals are put to the public with all the safeguards that the statutory procedures provide.

Lorries

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the progress of research and development of quieter lorries.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The quiet heavy vehicle (QHV90) programme was set up to research and develop quieter lorries for the 1990s. The programme is on target and will be substantially complete within the next two years.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been achieved with regard to improvement for safety standards for heavy lorries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: New and improved safety standards have been introduced for lorries and trailers. More are being developed. These include from 1982 a higher standard of braking, from 1983 sideguards and rear under-run guards, from 1985 spray suppression equipment and from 1988 additional mirrors.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any studies have been undertaken or are planned by his Department into the effects on buildings and services of heavy lorry vibration.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A preliminary study into the effects of traffic vibration on buildings is under way.

Further work will depend on the results of this preliminary study.

An earlier study was carried out into the settlement of buried services subject to traffic vibration.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish an analysis of the numbers of lorries, divided into weight categories, over a represenative period in order to determine the effects of increases in maximum permitted lorry weights.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: An analysis of the stock of goods vehicles by gross vehicle weight is given in table 1, annex A, of the Department of Transport statistics bulletin 86(5) "Monitoring 38 tonne goods vehicles". A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the policy of the Government with regard to the reduction of lorry noise; and if he plans to achieve further reductions in statutory maximum permitted noise levels.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: New noise limits for lorries were agreed in the European Community in 1984 and promulgated in directive EC 84/424. The details are set out in my hon. Friend, the then Minister of State for Transport's reply of 22 October 1984 in column *419* of the *Official Report*. We shall be amending national regulations to make compliance with these limits compulsory from the earliest dates permitted by the directive.

Bus Subsidies

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the total cost of bus subsidies in the current year; and if he will publish a comparison with the figures for previous years since 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: The figures are shown in the table.

Bus subsidies in Great Britain

£ million

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	**1985-86*
Fuel duty rebate	67	80	89	103	101	127	131
New bus grant	66	74	58	30	16	1	†
Revenue grants	242	337	411	526	553	‡525	467
Capital grants	5	9	12	4	20	10	
Concessionary fares	138	160	190	223	245	258	271
Total	518	660	760	886	935	921	869

* Estimated.
† Less than £0·5 million.
‡ Provisional.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the percentage of road accidents which are contributed to by road design faults; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Accident causes are not included on routine accident reports. However, in-depth studies of a sample of accidents in the 1970s indicated the following contributions of different factors:

(i) road environment alone: 2½ per cent. of accidents;

(ii) road environment and road user combined: 24 per cent. of accidents;

(iii) road environment combined with other factors: 1½ per cent. of accidents.

The figures quoted are from TRRL report SR 567. Causes are not included in routine (Stats 19) reports, because it is usually impossible for a police officer to make a proper assessment.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the number of accidents per road mile during the last three years in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Greater Manchester council area, *(c)* Bolton district council area and *(d)* Bolton, North-East parliamentary constituency area.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Accident rate, per kilometre, Great Britain, Greater Manchester and Bolton district council areas, 1982-84.

	Great Britain	*Greater Manchester*	*Bolton district council area*
1982	0·74	1·45	*
1983	0·70	1·42	1·39
1984	0·73	1·45	1·56

* Not available.

Data are not available for the Bolton, North-East parliamentary constituency area and for the Bolton district council area in 1982.

Maritime Services (Eire)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the annual cost for the last five years for which figures are available of maintaining lighthouses and navigational and seismographic services around the coasts of the Republic of Ireland and in Republic of Ireland territorial waters.

Mr. Nicholas Ridley: The Commissioners of Irish Lights are responsible for lighthouses and other navigational aids around the coast of the whole of Ireland. They are financed from the General Lighthouse Fund for which I am responsible. The commissioners' expenditure (in sterling, at the rate of exchange current at the time) for each of the last five years for which published accounts are available was:

	£
1979-80	5,921,000
1980-81	6,701,000
1981-82	8,227,000
1982-83	7,888,000
1983-84	8,779,000

The commissioners' expenditure relating to the coast around the Republic is not identified separately in their accounts, but the figure of 70 per cent. was adopted for the purposes of the coast-sharing agreement that was negotiated with the Irish Government last year.

The provision of seismographic services around the coasts of the Republic is not a matter for the commissioners or for me.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he expects British Rail Engineering Limited to follow a policy of open tendering between its workshops for heavy repair work from the various regions of British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: The British Railways Board is introducing a system of competitive tendering for heavy overhauls in which British Rail Engineering Ltd. (BREL) will be in competition with the private sector. The way in which BREL distributes its work load internally is a management matter for the company.

British Railways Board (Land)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the location and respective size of each site owned or managed by the British Railways Board that is either surplus to requirements or derelict land in England and Wales.

Mr. David Mitchell: Particulars of land-holdings are matters of management for the British Railways Board. Information on unused and under-used BRB sites of more than one acre is given in the registers prepared in accordance with the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Registers covering the whole of England are available for public inspection at the Department of the Environment. Registers for Welsh districts are in the course of being built up: those that are completed are available for public inspection at the Welsh Office.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 19 February 1986

TRANSPORT

British Rail

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he last met the chairman of British Rail, he discussed investment in the rail network in the north-west.

Mr. David Mitchell: I am happy to discuss any such matter which the chairman of BR feels it helpful to raise with me. Investment in the rail network of the north-west was not among the subjects raised at my last meeting with the chairman.

British Airways (Helicopter Sales)

Mr. Harris asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the implications of the proposed sale of British Airways helicopters for the future of the Penzance to Isles of Scilly helicopter link.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I understand from British Airways that steps have been taken to restore the Penzance to Isles of Scilly helicopter link to profitability and that British Airways helicopters have no intention of terminating that service in the foreseeable future. British Airways is in discussion with a number of parties about the possible disposal of British Airways helicopters, but no agreement has yet been reached.

Highway Schemes (Manchester)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list details of the grant and capital allocations for highway schemes for the years 1985-86 and 1986-87 in the Greater Manchester council area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The capital allocation for roads and car parks in 1985-86 is £21 million and in 1986-87 is £30·54 million.

These include the highway schemes supported by transport supplementary grant in the Greater Manchester council area, which are as follows:

	Accepted Expenditure £000	
	1985-86	*1986-87*
Urban Traffic Control	883	349
Central Manchester Stage 3	14	1
A5103 Princess Road Improvement, Moss Side	442	289
Leigh-Atherton Bypass	4,820	1,018
Ringway Road Diversion	450	17
Wigan Inner Ring Road	2,000	3,344
A57 Hyde Town Centre Bypass	1,151	719
Carrington Spur	288	3,093
Manchester/Salford Inner Ring Road (Blackfriars Road-Jubilee Street)	692	4,312
Manchester/Salford Inner Ring Road East (Redhill Street-Fairfield Street)	—	3,000
A6053 Water Street Improvement, Radcliffe	—	970
Manchester/Salford Inner Ring Road (Blackfriars Road-Gore Street)	—	700
Southern Link Road, Stockport	—	550
A626 Diversion, Stockport	—	3,000
Minor Works	1,840	2,500
Total accepted expenditure	12,580	23,862
Transport Supplementary Grant	6,290	11,931

Expenditure accepted for TSG in 1986-87 is nearly 90 per cent. more than in 1985-86.

Blackburn Road-Astley Bridge Bypass

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from Bolton district council about the eligibility for grant of the Blackburn road-Astley bridge bypass; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have not received representations from Bolton district council on this bypass. The scheme was not included in Greater Manchester council's transport policy and programme submission for 1986-87. It was not mentioned in the district council's letter of endorsement of the county council's submission.

European Road Safety Year

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action is being taken in the Bolton area in support of European Road Safety Year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is not undertaking specific projects in the Bolton area in support of the European Road Safety Year. Local initiatives could be publicised in the European Road Safety Year "Newsfile". A copy is in the House of Commons Library.

Oil Pollution (The Minch)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent investigations his Department have carried out into the environmental implication of oil spillages from large crude oil carrying tankers on the Minch.

Mr. Ridley: None. My Department does not carry out investigations of the environmental implications of oil spillages in particular areas, the consequences of which depend on a number of factors, including the amount of oil spilt, its type, the weather and tidal conditions at the time and the speed with which a clean-up operation can be mounted.

But the general effects of oil spillages on the environment are well understood and my Department's marine pollution control unit spends just over £1 million a year on research into methods of cleaning up oil at sea and on the coastline, directed at minimising those effects.

M25 (Lighting)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will accept the recent offer by Phillips to provide lighting for parts of the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We saw the press release. There was not a formal offer, though I will take up the suggestion of a discussion on the proposals.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Departmental Heads and Deputies

Mr. McWilliam asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will list the names of the heads and deputies of the Departments and offices of the House together with which Civil Service grade they are linked for pay and conditons of service purposes, together with any proposals the Commission has to change these gradings.

Mr. Beith: The information is as follows:

Department of the Clerk of the House	
Clerk of the House of Commons	
Sir Kenneth Bradshaw, KCB	Grade 1
Clerk Assistant	
C. J. Boulton, CB	Grade 2
Clerk of Committees	
D. A. M. Pring, CB, MC	Grade 2
Department of the Serjeant at Arms	
Serjeant at Arms	
Major G. V. S. Le Fanu	Grade 3
Deputy Serjeant at Arms	
Major P. N. W. Jennings	Grade 5
Department of the Library	
Librarian	
D. Menhennet DPhil	Grade 3
Deputy Librarian	
D. J. T. Englefield	Grade 5
Vote Office	
Deliverer of the Vote	
G. R. Russell	Grade 6
Deputy Deliverer of the Vote	
H. C. Foster	90 per cent. of Grade 7
Administration Department	
Head of Department	
A. C. J. Poole	Grade 3
Fees Office	
Accountant	
J. L. G. Dobson	Grade 4
Deputy Accountant	
A. J. Lewis	Grade 5
Establishments Office	
Head of Office	
G. A. Roberts	Grade 5
Deputy Head of Office	
J. A. Robb	Grade 6
Department of the Official Report	
Editor	
K. S. Morgan	Grade 4
Deputy Editor	
L. R. Johns	Grade 6 point 3*
Refreshment Department	
General Manager	
W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF	Grade 6
Deputy General Manager	
E. J. Nash, MCFA	Grade 7

* The grading of the Deputy Editor is the subject of present negotiations. The Commission have no other proposals for regrading at present before them.

Newspapers

Mr. Madden asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make immediate arrangements for the purchase of newspapers published by News Group Newspapers and Times Newspapers Ltd. for the benefit of hon. Members and officials to cease.

Mr. Biffen: No.

Newspaper Advertisements

Mr. Madden asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will undertake not to place any advertisement on behalf of the House, including job vacancies, in newspapers published by News Group Newspapers and Times Newspapers Ltd.

Mr. Beith: No. Recruitment advertisements for posts in the House service are placed in a variety of newspapers depending on the nature of the posts, past experience of the effectiveness of different newspapers, and the wishes of the Department concerned.

Mr. Madden asked the Lord Privy Seal what has been the cost of buying newspapers for the benefit of hon. Members and officials over the past year; and what proportion of newspapers available in the House are provided free by newspaper publishers.

Mr. Biffen: In 1985 expenditure on newspapers for use in the House was approximately £29,000. About 27 per cent. of the newspapers provided by the Department of the Serjeant at Arms for Members and senior officers of the House are supplied free, as are approximately 60 per cent. of the newspaper titles available in the Library's Reference Room.

WALES

Sewer Collapses

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to the extent of sewer collapses in Wales in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The annual report of the Welsh water authority for 1984-85 (a copy of which is in the Library provides on page 18, figure 7, a block graph showing reported sewer collapses from 1981 to 1984. Definitive figures are available from the Welsh water authority and I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Gentleman.

Tan-yr-Unto Bend

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales if the fresh investigations into the appropriate long-term solution to the problem posed by the Tan-yr-Unto bend have been made; and when a decision can be expected.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: These investigations are proceeding urgently. I hope to be able to make an announcement later this year. In the meantime the county council has prepared additional safety measures for the Tan-yr-Unto bend itself. It is hoped to implement these shortly.

Community Programme (Anglesey)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many places on the community programme since its beginning have been available on Anglesey.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Between October 1982 and December 1985 a cumulative total of 754 places have been available on the community programme on Anglesey.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many individuals have been placed on the community programme on Anglesey since its beginning; how many of these have found employment at the conclusion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Precise information in the form requested is not available but between October 1982 and December 1985, 808 people were placed on the programme by the four jobcentres in Anglesey. Separate figures for Anglesey are not available but national surveys indicate that 25 per cent. of participants in Wales leave the community programme to go straight into employment. The Government believe it is right to channel direct support for long term unemployed people through such programmes.

Beef Farmers

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of beef farmers in Wales with (i) fewer than 50 head of cattle, (ii) fewer than 100 head of cattle but more than 50, (iii) fewer than 500 head of cattle but more than 100 and (iv) more than 500 head of cattle.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In June 1985 the annual census recorded 10,528 main holdings in Wales with between 1 and 49 beef cows, 497 with between 50 and 99 and 68 with between 100 and 499. There were no holdings with more than 500 beef cows.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of beef producers in Wales (i) for whom beef production is their sole enterprise and (ii) for whom beef production is additional to a major agricultural enterprise in another sector.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In June 1985 in Wales the total number of main holdings with beef cows was 11,093; of these, 2,320 were predominantly involved in a beef production enterprise.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many persons in the Holyhead travel-to-work area have been unemployed for 12 months or more at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will give the similar figure for the same time in 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In January 1986 1,804 persons in the Holyhead travel-to-work area had been unemployed for over 12 months. Comparable figures are not available before October 1983 when the total was 1,407.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme (Anglesey)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many individuals on Anglesey have benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme ssince its beginning; how many have remained working at the conclusion of the scheme; how many places have been made available; how long is the current waiting period between application and entry on the scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Since its national launch in August 1983, 283 people have entered the enterprise allowance scheme on Anglesey. Separate information for individual areas is not available but a national survey of participants on the EAS pilot project indicated that 61 per cent. of those completing one year on the scheme were still trading two years later. In north Wales the number of places available is to increase from 1,196 to 1,490 in April this year. There are no waiting lists for entry on to the scheme in Anglesey but counselling and the evaluation of applicants typically takes between two and five weeks. This is a highly successful scheme which forms an important part of our programme to encourage the growth of new employment opportunities.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many school leavers have been found places on the YTS since its beginning on Anglesey; how many have found permanent employment; how many employers have offered places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Precise information in respect of school leavers is not available but since 1 April 1983 some 1,502 young people have entered the scheme in Anglesey; this figure includes a small number of re-entrants. Figures for those who have found permanent employment after training are available only for the Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys areas and the latest figures from a 100 per cent. follow-up survey show that of those leaving between April and August 1985 some 57 per cent. found permanent employment. 565 employers have offered YTS places in Anglesey.

The introduction of two-year YTS from April this year is a major development which will provide trainees with the opportunity to gain vocational qualifications.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many youngsters joining YTS schemes in Wales in 1985 left before completion of the course, as a percentage of those joining such schemes.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The only information available relates to the period April to October 1985 when 2,509 youngsters prematurely left YTS, which is 17 per cent. of those who joined during the same period.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the deaths in Wales in each of the last five years for which records are available attributed to *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

ICD Numbers	Cause of death	Sex	Number of deaths 1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	Males	1,415	1,361	1,373	1,391	1,413
		Females	351	396	456	474	434
		Persons	1,766	1,757	1,829	1,865	1,847
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	Males	1,001	869	800	771	709
		Females	278	238	257	208	216
		Persons	1,279	1,107	1,057	979	925
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	Males	5,746	5,591	5,714	5,786	5,539
		Females	3,960	4,020	4,133	4,094	4,188
		Persons	9,706	9,611	9,847	9,880	9,727

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the last five years for which records are available, the average age of those who died from *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is given in the following table:

ICD Numbers	Cause of death	Sex	Average age of deaths 1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	Males	69·3	68·9	68·8	69·3	69·5
		Females	67·6	68·0	67·3	68·0	68·6
		Persons	68·9	68·7	68·4	69·0	69·3
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	Males	73·8	73·4	74·3	74·0	74·2
		Females	73·2	73·8	75·1	74·1	74·8
		Persons	73·7	73·5	74·5	74·0	74·4
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	Males	69·4	69·8	70·4	70·0	70·6
		Females	75·6	76·7	76·9	76·9	77·1
		Persons	71·9	72·7	73·2	72·9	73·4

Life Expectancy

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the expectation of life at age 16 years for men and women in each of the past 30 years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not readily available for Wales. The expectation of life at age 15 years for men and women in Wales for 1971-73, 1973-75, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1977-1979 and 1981-1983 is, however, published in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for Wales": volumes No. 3 (1976), No. 4 (1977), No. 5 (1978), No. 6 (1979), No. 7 (1980), No. 11 (1984) and No. 12 (1985) respectively. Copies of the publication are in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those organisations in Wales with which he has consulted concerning the implications of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill; on what date the invitation to consult was posted to those organisations; and by what date he requires to receive their response.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The organisations in Wales which we have consulted about the Government's proposals or amendments to the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill are as follows. The consultation letters were issued on 14 February with responses requested by 3 March.

Committee of Welsh District Councils
Welsh Counties Committee
Local Authorities
Chief Executives
Director of Social Services
Wales Council for the Blind
Wales Council for the Deaf
Wales Council for the Disabled
Spastic Society in Wales
Wales MIND
Age Concern (Wales)
MENCAP (Wales)
Wales Council for Voluntary Action
District Health Authorities
Society of Welsh Planning Officers
Society of Education Officers (Wales)

Community Residential Places

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of community residential places in Wales for each year from 1976 to 1986-87, giving estimated figures where actual figures are not yet available; and if he will also give *(a)* the number of residents, *(b)* the number of residents per 100,000 of the population and *(c)* the number of residents in each of the following age ranges: under two years, two to four years, five to nine years, 10 to 15 years, 16 to 18 years, 19 to 64 years, 65 to 75 years and 75 plus years.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The two tables give the relevant information which is centrally available for the years 1976 to 1985. It is not the Department's practice to provide estimated figures for future years.

Residential Accommodation for the Elderly, Younger Physically Handicapped, Blind, Mentally Ill and Mentally Handicapped in Local Authority, Private and Voluntary Homes

Year*	Number of places	Number of residents	Residents by age: Under 65	Rate per 100,000 population aged under 65	65 and over	Rate per 100,000 population aged 65 and over
1976	9,900	9,263	1,396	58·5	7,867	1,915·5
1977	10,113	9,596	1,397	58·6	8,199	1,977·6
1978	10,457	9,972	†1,512	63·5	†8,460	2,013·3
1979	11,120	10,242	1,662	69·9	8,580	2,014·1
1980	11,598	‡10,761	1,777	74·7	8,959	2,075·8
1981	12,076	11,040	1,824	76·7	9,216	2,103·1
1982	12,524	11,416	1,882	79·3	9,534	2,163·9
1983	12,959	11,830	2,032	85·9	9,798	2,221·3
1984	14,051	12,653	2,096	88·5	10,557	2,402·6
1985	15,009	13,521	2,219	93·7	11,302	2,568·6

* Information relates to 31 March.
† The age breakdown is estimated for the elderly, younger physically handicapped and blind residents.
‡ Total includes 25 mentally handicapped residents for whom age is not available.

Children in Care in Community Homes or in the care of Voluntary Organisations

Year*	Aged under 1: Number	Aged under 1: Rate per 100,000 population	Aged 1-4: Number	Aged 1-4: Rate per 100,000 population	Aged 5-9: Number	Aged 5-9: Rate per 100,000 population	Aged 10-15: Number	Aged 10-15: Rate per 100,000 population	Aged 16-17: Number	Aged 16-17: Rate per 100,000 population	Aged over 17: Number	Aged over 17: Rate per 100,000 population
1976†	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1977	16	48·0	125	82·8	316	143·6	1,109	401·6	316	389·6	8	0·4
1978	13	40·6	102	71·4	275	127·4	1,075	385·8	307	366·3	11	0·5
1979	10	31·2	96	70·5	222	105·3	1,029	369·2	366	420·2	6	0·3
1980	5	14·3	72	54·3	184	90·4	982	354·1	349	389·0	6	0·3
1981	2	5·4	37	27·9	150	76·7	876	321·0	327	353·1	2	0·1
1982	4	11·2	23	16·9	119	64·2	832	310·0	335	351·9	1	0·05
1983	1	2·9	33	23·8	90	51·0	734	278·4	299	315·7	3	0·1
1984	2	5·6	14	9·8	52	30·8	601	234·1	273	293·5	2	0·1
1985	2	5·7	10	7·0	40	24·0	498	200·1	202	225·4	3	0·1

* Information relates to 31 March.
† Information was not collected centrally for 1976.

Mentally Handicapped People

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were *(a)* the total number of patients, *(b)* the number in each of the following age ranges: under two years, two to four years, five to nine years, 10 to 15 years, 19 to 64 years, 65 to 74 years and 75 plus years, *(c)* the number of patients per 100,000 population, *(d)* the number of under 16-year-olds, *(e)* the number of under 16-year-olds per 100,000 population, *(f)* the number of adults over 16 years of age and *(g)* the number of adults over 16 years per 100,000 population in hospitals for the mentally handicapped in Wales for each year from 1976 to 1986-87, giving estimated figures where actual figures are not yet available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information relates to the period 1976 to 1984 and is shown in the following table:

Patients and Mental Handicap Hospitals and Units, 1976-84

Age (years)	Estimated number of residents at 31 December: 1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Under 10	63	61	42	31	36	25	20	11	10
10-15	*112	138	112	79	65	59	57	53	38
20-64	1,669	1,697	1,676	1,698	1,669	1,627	1,618	1,594	1,521
65-74	225	211	220	249	251	251	228	221	212
75 and over	34	53	47	83	94	92	97	110	113
Under 16	n/a	199	154	110	101	84	77	63	48
16 and over	n/a	2,116	2,122	2,159	2,123	2,069	2,026	2,001	1,914
All ages	2,303	2,315	2,276	2,269	2,224	2,153	2,103	2,064	1,962

* Age range 10-14 years for 1976.
n/a=not available.

Age (years)	Estimated number of residents per 100,000 population: 1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Under 10	30	16	11	8	10	7	6	3	3
10-15	*48	50	40	28	24	22	22	21	15

Age (years)	Estimated number of residents per 100,000 population								
	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
20-64	108	110	108	109	107	104	104	101	96
65-74	84	79	81	91	92	92	85	84	82
75 and over	23	35	30	52	57	55	56	62	62
Under 16	n/a	30	23	17	16	13	13	10	9
16 and over	n/a	99	99	100	97	95	92	91	86
All ages	82	83	81	81	79	77	75	74	70

* Age range 10-14 years for 1976.
n/a=not available.

Woolaway Houses

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the refurbishment of Woolaway type homes under the Housing Defects Act; how many such homes in Wales are eligible under the Act; how many refurbishment schemes have been completed to date; what is the existing financial limit on such schemes; if he will increase that limit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Welsh Office has received 18 representations and inquiries about the reinstatement of Woolaway houses. According to returns from local authorities, there are about 230 such houses which originated in the public sector and were sold before the cut-off date for assistance under the Housing Defects Act 1984. I am not aware of any that have yet been reinstated. The eligible expense limit for reinstatement grant under the Act is £14,000.

We have no plans to increase the limit at present. No repair scheme for Woolaway houses has been licensed by PRC Homes Ltd. yet and it is too early to see if the present limit will prove appropriate or not. We would be prepared to prescribe a new limit should it prove necessary.

Radioactive Discharge (Monitoring)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what action has been undertaken by his Department to monitor the level of radioactive discharge around the Welsh coast, arising out of radioactive material released from British Nuclear Fuels Limited, Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Monitoring around the Welsh coast has been carried out for many years to ensure that discharges of radioactive waste, from whatever source, do not pose a threat to the public. Results of this monitoring, which is carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is published annually in its aquatic environmental monitoring report on radioactivity and surface and coastal waters of the British Isles. A copy of the latest report No. 13 is in the Library.

School Leavers (YTS)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many youngsters leaving school in 1985 are currently attached to a YTS programme; how many were unemployed in January; and if he will express both figures as a percentage of those leaving school in 1985.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information is not available in the precise form requested. At the end of January there were 16,001 1985 school leavers participating in YTS. Information about the numbers still seeking work in January is not available because the Department of Employment's unemployment statistics do not indicate the year in which a young person left school.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh youngsters leaving school in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1981, *(d)* 1982, *(e)* 1983 and *(f)* 1984 have been unemployed permanently since leaving school.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information in the precise form requested is not available as Department of Employment statistics do not indicate the year in which an unemployed young person left school. However in January 1986 there were 6,405 young people aged under 18 who had been continuously unemployed since leaving school, 4,448 aged 18 and 9,374 aged 19 or over.

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is his latest estimate of *(a)* the original value, *(b)* the written down book value and *(c)* the estimated replacement cost of the assets of the Welsh water authority.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: All of the information requested is contained in the Welsh water authority's 1984-85 annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Public Bodies (Ministerial Appointments)

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of all bodies to which he has made appointments since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 February 1986, c. *413*]: Since 1979 my right hon. Friend has made appointments to the following bodies for which he has sole responsibility for making all or a majority of ministerial appointments.

Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees.
Agricultural Wages Committees.
Agricultural Advisory Panel for Wales.
All Wales Advisory Panel on Development of Services for Mentally Handicapped.
Ancient Monuments Board for Wales.
Committee on Agricultural Valuation.
Committee on Opportunities for Volunteering.
Committee for the Welsh Scheme for the Development of Health and Social Research.
Committee for under Fives Initiatives.
Community Health Councils.
Court and Council of the National Library of Wales.
Cwmbran Development Corporation.
Development Board for Rural Wales.
District Health Authorities.
Examinations in Public Panels.
Forestry Commission Reference Committee Panels.
Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales.
Health Policy Board.
Historic Buildings Council for Wales.
Housing Management Advisory Panel.
Land Authority for Wales.

Local Government Boundary Commission for Wales.
National Park Committee.
Perinatal Mortality Survey Group.
Place Names Advisory Committee.
Library and Information Services Council (Wales).
Regional Land Drainage Committee of Welsh Water Authority.
Rent Assessment Panel for Wales.
Review Group on Mental Illness Services in Dyfed (wound up in 1985).
Review of Community Nursing Services for Wales.
Saundersfoot Harbour Commission.
South Wales Sea Fisheries Committee.
Sports Council for Wales.
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education.
Wales Tourist Board.
Welsh Committee for Post Graduate Pharmaceutical Education.
Welsh Computer Strategy Committee (wound up in 1985).
Welsh Development Agency.
Welsh Health Common Services Authority.
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board.
Welsh National Board for nursing Midwifery and Health Visiting.
Welsh Scientific Advisory Committee.
Welsh Water Authority.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

New Technology (Research)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what research is currently being funded by Government Departments into the social and economic consequences of the introduction of new technology, especially that likely to be developed from the Alvey programme and its successors.

Mr. Pattie: Research on the social and economic consequences of the introduction of the new technologies is directed as much at informing public debate on this important issue as it is in helping to guide Government policy making. Although the Department of Trade and Industry is supporting some research in a related area, it is more appropriate that support should come from other public funded bodies such as the Economic and Social Research Council and the National Economic Development Office.

There is a large and growing volume of activity in this field of research. The Economic and Social Research Council is giving high priority to funding and co-ordinating research not only into the social and economic aspects of new technologies but also their legal and managerial consequences. Professor Melody, who has been appointed to advise ESRC on this area, has been in touch with the Alvey directorate and other interested parties during the design stage of the proposed new research programme. Other committees of the ESRC are also involved.

The National Economic Development Office Information Techaology economic development committee has a long term perspective group which is researching possible IT futures by commissioning studies from a variety of sources. The group is expected to report later this year.

The Department of Trade and Industry is maintaining close links with the ESRC and the NEDO IT long term perspectives group. In addition, because of the Department's concern with questions of acceptance and effective use of new technologies (and the probable dire consequences of their rejection), the DTI supported the public acceptance of new technologies project which was one of 18 collaborative research projects initiated at the 1982 Versailles summit meeting. Some of the results of this research have already been published, by the Policy Studies Institute, London, and the policy research in engineering, science and technology, University of Manchester.

Lloyd's (Committee of Inquiry)

Mr. Gerald Howarth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is in a position to give details of the membership of the committee of inquiry into regulatory arrangements at Lloyd's, the setting up of which he announced on 10 January.

Mr. Channon: I am pleased to be able to announce that the chairman of the committee of inquiry, Sir Patrick Neill, QC will be joined by Mr. Denis Allport, formerly chairman and chief executive of Metal Box and Mr. Brian Pomeroy, a partner of Touche Ross. The committee's terms of reference are

"to consider whether the regulatory arrangements which are being established at Lloyd's under the 1982 Lloyd's Act provide protection for the interests of members of Lloyd's comparable to that proposed for investors under the Financial Services Bill, and to report to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry by the summer."

Polychlorinated Biphenyls (Shipment)

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to prevent the importation of 15 tonnes of polychlorinated biphenyls from Australia, for processing at the Re-Chem Company at Pontypool.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986, c. *84*]: No. It would be contrary to our international trading obligations to ban the import of waste containing polychlorinated biphenyls for processing, whilst allowing the processing of such waste emanating in the United Kingdom.

Manufacturing Investment

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give figures for *(a)* Stoke on Trent, *(b)* the west midlands and *(c)* the United Kingdom showing the percentage change between 1979 and the most recent year for which figures are available for (i) manufacturing output and (ii) investment in manufacturng industry; and if he will list the steps he has taken in the last 12 months to improve the figures.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1986, c. *95*]: The United Kingdom's manufacturing output decreased by 5 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1985, and it is estimated that investment in manufacturing industry fell by 18 per cent. (at 1980 prices) over the same period.

However, between 1981 and 1985 manufacturing output and investment in the manufacturing sector rose by 11 per cent. and 19 per cent. respectively.

Statistical information if not readily available for Stoke on Trent, but current price comparisons for the west midlands and the United Kingdom are shown in the table for the period 1979 to 1983, the latest period for which data is available.

Percentage change in manufacturing industry 1979-83*

	Net output percentage	*Net capital expenditure percentage*
United Kingdom	+26	−10
West Midlands	+13	−15

* Divisions 2-4 of the Standard Industrial Classification (1980).
Source: Annual Census of Production.

Regional selective assistance is available in a large area of the west midlands (but not Stoke on Trent); 235 offers have been made under this scheme with a value of £27 million and associated with £262 million project costs this will help either to safeguard or create 15,700 jobs in the area. West midlands regional office has taken part in more than 50 seminars in order to publicise regional selective assistance.

Since April 1984, 198 offers under the support for innovation scheme have been made in the west midlands area with a total value of £18 million. Of this, 32 offers, worth nearly £2 million, have been made to recipients in the Stoke on Trent travel-to-work area.

Burroughs Machines

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government assistance has been given to Burroughs Machines by way of regional selective assistance and regional development grant in each year from 1979: *(a)* in total, *(b)* in Scotland and *(c)* in Cumbernauld and Kilsyth.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 February 1986, c. *96*]: Information on all payments of regional selective assistance and regional development grants to individual companies is not available for reasons of confidentiality. The value of offers of regional selective assistance over £5,000 and payments of regional development grants over £25,000 to Burroughs Machines Ltd. since 1979 which have been published in British business are given in the following table:

Regional Selective Assistance Offered:

£'000

	Total (Great Britain)	*Scotland*	*Cumbernauld and Kilsyth*
1979	17·6	—	—
1980	1,102·0	1,102·0	—
1981	—	—	—
1982	1,080·0	1,080·0	—
1983	1,830·0	1,830·0	630·0
1984	—	—	—
1985	—	—	—

Regional Development Grants:

£'000

	Total (Great Britain)	*Scotland*	*Cumbernauld and Kilsyth*
1979	232·0	232·0	40·0
1980	419·0	419·0	252·0
1981	312·0	176·0	—
1982	327·0	170·0	103·0
1983	162·0	70·0	—
1984	718·0	685·0	369·0
1985	761·0	761·0	308·0

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Military Forces (Europe)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards a mandatory confidence-building régime requiring exchange of information about the size and movement of military forces in Europe, and providing for observers and on-site inspections.

Mr. Renton: NATO Allies in 1984 tabled proposals at the Conference on Disarmament in Europe at Stockholm for measures covering the military activities mentioned by my hon. Friend. Agreement on procedural matters has permitted drafting to begin. We continue to hope that it will be possible to agree with other conference participants on practical confidence and security building measures.

People's Mojahedin Organisation, Iran

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have had any recent contacts with the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We do not have official contacts with the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran.

Uganda

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests for assistance in re-establishing democracy and stability have been received from the Ugandan Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: I visited Uganda on 12 February. During the course of my visit, I met President Museveni for nearly two hours and had separate meetings with senior members of his Cabinet including the Prime Minister, Dr. Kisekka. My discussions were friendly and open throughout.

I gave President Museveni a message from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister which expressed the hope that Uganda could now achieve reconciliation, real stability and prosperity. I told the President of our offer of up to £5 million to assist with rehabilitation, in addition to money already pledged for the Owen Falls power station. We expect the Ugandan Government to inform us of their priorities for assistance shortly. A team from the Overseas Development Administration will visit Kampala in the near future. A senior British officer, Major General Tony Pollard will be attached to our High Commission in Kampala for a short period to assess the military assistance needs of the new Ugandan Government.

European School, Culham

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has received the judgment of the European Court in the case of taxation of salary supplements paid at the European school in Culham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: I have been asked to reply.

The Government have received the preliminary ruling of the European Court. I am not able to comment on the affairs of individual taxpayers, but the ruling will be studied with care.

NATIONAL FINANCE

United States Federal Excise Tax (Exemption)

Sir William Clark asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *510*, what action Her Majesty's Government have undertaken to persuade the United States Congress to retain in its present form the exemption from federal excise tax presently enjoyed by United Kingdom insurance companies.

Mr. Moore: We have made representations to both the United States Treasury and the United States Senate Finance Committee recording our concern that current United States proposals would override the United Kingdom-United States double taxation convention. We have also sent to the United States authorities a detailed study arguing that there is no evidence of abuse of the exemption provided for in the convention.

Whitbread Poacher Beer

Mr. Michael Cocks asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 30 January, *Official Report*, column *593*, if he will seek the permission of Whitbread plc to release the information sought on the beer referred to.

Mr. Lawson: The release of the information is a matter for Whitbreads: it is not a matter for me.

Enterprise Allowance Scheme

Mr. David Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to change the tax treatment of payments under the enterprise allowance scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: At this time of year my right hon. Friend will not expect me to anticipate the Budget statement.

Income Statistics

Mr. Maples asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers are estimated to have incomes in excess of £30,000 per annum; and what is estimated to be their aggregated total income in excess of £30,000 per annum each.

Mr. Moore: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

THE ARTS

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986, c. *55*]: This was my first visit, as Arts Minister, to Liverpool, and I was much impressed by the lively arts and cultural activities in and around the city. I announced the creation of the trustee body to be known as the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside which will own and maintain, through grant-in-aid from my Department, the bulk of the present museum and art gallery services of the Merseyside county council. This will include the exciting new maritime museum in the restored Albert dock.

I met representatives of Merseyside Arts, the Playhouse and Everyman theatres, and the Royal Liverpool philharmonic society, and discussed their funding problems after abolition of the metropolitan county. The Arts Council and the successor authorities are still negotiating about the contribution to be made by those authorities to their funding. The Philharmonic hall is also the subject of continuing discussion. The Arts Council will be continuing its funding of the Royal Liverpool philharmonic orchestra and hopes that, if the successor authorities play their part this will enable the funding of the hall itself to be maintained. I was also pleased to learn that Apollo Leisure Ltd. intended to take over the lease on the Empire theatre; the Arts Council will continue to fund the major touring companies which appear there.

PRIME MINISTER

Honours System

2. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will initiate a review of the working of the honours system.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) on 16 December 1985 at column *3*.

Official Cars

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Prime Minister if she will name those former Ministers of the Crown who retain the use of official cars; and what was the total cost of this facility in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister: At present, former Ministers of the Crown have use of official cars only on security grounds and it is not therefore in the interests of security to disclose details. Current costs of such provision in a full year are £190,000.

No. 10 Downing Street

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Prime Minister what was the total public expenditure on No. 10 Downing street in each of the last five years.

The Prime Minister: The total costs to public funds of the Prime Minister's Office, including 10 Downing street and Chequers, in each of the last five years are:

*Cost at Outturn Prices**

Year (April to March)	£
1980-81	1,744,824
1981-82†	2,415,301
1982-83	2,699,752
1983-84‡	3,026,042
1984-85	3,753,898

* Includes grant in aid to the Chequers Trust, salaries and wages, pension liability and administration costs, but excludes the salary of the Prime Minister messengerial and cleaning services, and any allowance for accommodation until 1983-84 when the property repayment scheme was introduced.

† The increase in cost between 1980-81 and 1981-82 reflects the change in the basis of charging by MOD for aircraft used by the Prime Minister, and the introduction of repayment for the Service staff at Chequers, previously provided as an allied service.

‡ Following the abolition of the CPRS, the policy unit in the Prime

Minister's Office was strengthened by four staff. In the last full year of its existence (1982-83) CPRS employed 35 people and cost £1,109,000. Thus, while the cost of the Prime Minister's Office increased as a result of the abolition of the CPRS, substantial net overall savings were made.

It is not possible, without disproportionate expense, to separate the costs of 10 Downing street and Chequers.

Newspaper Advertising

Mr. Madden asked the Prime Minister if she will issue an instruction to all Government Departments and the Central Office of Information to withhold advertising from newspapers published by News Group Newspapers and Times Newspapers Ltd.

The Prime Minister: No.

ENERGY

Petrol Prices

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to regulate petrol prices.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: No.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Motoring Offences

Mr. Lofthouse asked the Attorney-General what guidance is available to the police prosecutor in cases of serious motoring offences to assist the prosecutor to decide upon the most appropriate charge.

The Attorney-General: At present I only have constitutional responsibility for the work of the Director of Public Prosecutions. However, the Home Secretary has disseminated to chief constables copies of my general guidelines on the criteria for prosecution, issued in February 1983. Prosecutors will also take into account any decision by the higher courts on matters of law.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Immigration

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 29 November, *Official Report*, column *694*, when he will be able to give a substantive answer concerning visitors from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan.

Mr. Waddington: Shortly.

Holloway Prison

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what evening activities for prisoners currently take place at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: Evening classes include craft, cookery, typing, a self-awareness discussion group, English language and literature, art, dressmaking, music, physical education and wing association.

Visitors

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to strengthen the system for monitoring the embarkation of visitors to the United Kingdom upon the expiry of their leave to remain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have no present plans to do so but the arrangements for recording landing and embarkation records of passengers subject to immigration control are currently under review.

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *316*, what proportion of visitors is recorded on the computer system.

Mr. Waddington: In the 12 months ending June 1985, about 5 per cent. non-European Community nationals admitted as visitors to the United Kingdom were recorded on the immigration and nationality department computer.

Betting Offices

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the Betting Office Licence Association, seeking to allow betting offices to be open later; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received no such representations.

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library statistics giving the number of official complaints arising from the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act, the reports of any subsequent investigations and also the record of any informal resolutions or withdrawals.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information has not hitherto been compiled centrally but, in response to a suggestion made by Sir Cyril Philips in his first report on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984, a circular was issued in November 1985 to chief constables inviting them to notify the Home Office of such complaints. This information will be made available to Sir Cyril, and we shall consider what summary information for 1986 can be made available to Parliament when we respond to Sir Cyril's next report.

Metropolitan Police (Staffing)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss the staffing levels of the traffic division of the Metropolitan police with the Metropolitan Police Commissioner.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The traffic division has been considered as part of the urgent review of the manpower needs of the Metropolitan police which my right hon. Friend set in hand last October. He is now considering the outcome of this review.

Firearms

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new shotgun licences have been issued to persons residing *(a)* outside the Metropolitan police area and *(b)* within the Metropolitan police area in

each year since 1979 to date; how many persons are or have been holders of shotgun licences in each of the years since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information is set out in the following table:

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Number of shotgun certificates on issue at 31 December						
England and Wales (excluding the Metropolitan police district)	751,815	752,864	755,697	752,125	753,631	768,059
Metropolitan police district	30,259	28,990	29,528	28,504	29,747	30,293
Number of new shotgun certificates issued annually						
England and Wales (excluding the Metropolitan police district)	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	43,234	51,825
Metropolitan police district	2,908	3,246	3,348	2,504	3,378	3,761

Over the period the number of shotgun certificates on issue has increased by 0·1 per cent. in the Metropolitan police district compared with 2·2 per cent. elsewhere in England and Wales. Before issuing any shotgun certificate, the chief officer must of course be satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements set out in the Firearms Act 1968.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement upon the availablity of handguns, legally and illegally; and what his policy is in relation to the issue of licences for handguns.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions *(a)* handguns and *(b)* shotguns have been discharged at (i) the police and (ii) third parties in each year since 1979 showing on how many occasions a police officer or third person was (1) injured or (2) killed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Imitation Firearms

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the availability of imitation firearms; what evidence he has as to their useage in crime; and whether he has any plans to control them.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is already an offence to use any imitation firearms to resist arrest or to commit a crime. Heavy penalties apply in such cases. In addition, under the Firearms Act 1982, imitation firearms capable of ready conversion to fire live ammunition are already subject to the same stringent controls imposed on actual firearms by the Firearms Act 1968. We do not think that it would be sensible to restrict or try to control the sale or possesion of toy or imitation guns which are not capable of being converted to fire live ammunition. There are already many such imitations or toys in circulation, and realistic imitations can easily be constructed by those intent on a criminal act.

The following table gives information about notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales in which imitation firearms were reported to have been used:

Year	*Number of offences*
1979	144
1980	161
1981	206
1982	183
1983	167
1984	182

Crime Statistics

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were *(a)* indicted for armed robbery, *(b)* acquitted and *(c)* convicted, in each year since 1979; if he will give details of the offences alleged and the sentence imposed in each case of conviction; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Information collected centrally on court proceedings does not include details of the circumstances of offences, and it is not possible to distinguish offences of armed robbery from other offences of robbery. Information on proceedings at magistrates' and Crown courts for all offences of robbery can be found in Table S1.1(A). (Volume 1) and table S2.2(A) (Volume 2) of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables 1984" and in corresponding tables for earlier years; information on the length of custodial sentences imposed on those found guilty can be found in table S1.5 and tables S2.2 to S2.5 of the same volumes.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what restrictions have been imposed upon working overtime on Metropolitan police officers in each year since 1979; what effect such restrictions have had upon the amount of crime being investigated or not investigated, categorised in the most convenient form; and what effect such restrictions have upon individual police officers' inquiries and upon policing as a whole;

(2) if he will make a statement about the retirement of police officers from the Metropolitan police; what is the average length of service of a police officer of the rank of sergeant or below; and how many are serving with a length of service of *(a)* two years, *(b)* between two and three years, *(c)* between three and four years, *(d)* between four and five years, *(e)* between five and 10 years, *(f)* between 10 and 15 years, *(g)* between 15 and 20 years and *(h)* over 20 years;

(3) what steps he has taken to seek to prevent the premature retirement of Metropolitan police officers; what effect such retirement has had upon effective and efficient policing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much time is devoted by Metropolitan police officers to monitoring the case of offenders or suspects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is not possible to quantify the time spent by Metropolitan police officers on monitoring the care of persons in police custody.

The responsibilites attached to the new post of custody officer includes the care and welfare of offenders and suspects in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the codes of practice issued under it. The Commissioner is conscious of the need to ensure the well being of persons held in police custody and I understand that he is generally satisfied with the way the new procedures are working.

Priority Policing

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the nature, application, operation and priorities of priority policing within the Metropolitan police area; and if he will call for reports from chief constables outside the Metropolitan police area on the nature, application, operation and priorities of priority policing.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We attach great importance to the determination of objectives and priorities in the police service, and to the allocation of resources and the deployment of police and civilian manpower in a way that will most effectively and efficiently secure those objectives and priorities. Home Office circular No. 114/1983 invited chief officers of police and police authorities to keep their objectives, priorities and resources under review, and provided guidance on how this should be done. A copy of the circular is in the Library.

As regards the Metropolitan police district, for which my right hon. Friend is the police authority, the Commissioner submits to him in January each year a report setting out his strategy, goals and priorities for the forthcoming year. Copies of the report are placed in the Library and sent to right hon. and hon. Members for constituencies within the Metropolitan police district, and the report forms the basis of the annual debate on policing in the metropolis.

Burglary Screening

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how the system of burglary screening within the Metropolitan police area operates; why and when it was introduced; how many burglaries are being investigated by the CID, categorised by degree of investigation, since its introduction; if he will give comparable figures for the past four years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Burglary screening is a means of assessing the solvability of a case by awarding points derived from a careful analysis of evidence at a scene of a crime; it was introduced in the Metropolitan police district in September 1983 as a result of an examination by Metropolitan police officers of the methods of investigation underlying higher clear-up rates in other forces; the statistical information requested is not available.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many visitors filled in embarkation cards in each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985;

(2) how many visitors who had filled in embarkation cards left the United Kingdom in each of the years 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Waddington: I regret that information in the form requested is not available. However, I will shortly be writing to the hon. Member in reply to his letter of 29 October 1985 explaining the information available on the embarkation of visitors.

Crossbows

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the availability of crossbows and their usage in crime; and if he has any plans to take steps to introduce licences for their use or otherwise restrict their availability.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) on 3 February at column 5. I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is making changes in the membership of the Police Complaints Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Rear-Admiral John Bell is retiring from his post as deputy chairman of the authority on 28 February. I wish to take this opportunity to thank him for his excellent service first with the Police Complaints Board and then with the Police Complaints Authority. His knowledge and experience have made an outstanding contribution to the rapid establishment of the authority as a key part of the police complaints system.

John Pownall OBE, who has been a member of the authority since its establishment, has accepted my invitation to him to succeed to the vacant deputy chairman post from 1 March.

In addition, I have appointed Air Commodore, Stephen King, as a member of the authority. He will be taking up his appointment in the course of next month. I hope to announce a further new appointment shortly.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Mathematics, Science and Languages

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, from international sources available to him, he will publish the number of students in the United Kingdom, France and West Germany, who, at the age of 17 years, study mathematics, sciences and a foreign language.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information requested for France and Germany is not available. In England less than 1 per cent. of A-level school leavers have passes in these three subjects. It is generally believed that the proportion of pupils in post compulsory education studying such combinations is higher in France and West Germany than in the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend has taken steps to broaden the future curriculum of A-level students with the introduction of AS levels in 1987 for first examination in 1989.

University Clinical Academic Staff

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether a settlement has now been reached in respect of the pay of university clinical academic staff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reach a decision on the comparability of pay between clinical academic staff and academic staff generally.

Mr. Walden: The clinical academic staff salaries committee agreed on 7 February that the salaries of clinical academic staff should be increased in line with the 1985 award for NHS doctors and dentists. In reaching this agreement the Committee had before them a letter that my right hon. Friend had sent on the previous day to the Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. The text of this letter is:

6 February 1986

Dear Maurice

I undertook to let the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals have a response before tomorrow's meeting of CASSC to your letter of 18 June about clinical academics' pay. I am sorry not to have been able to write before now.

So far as the outstanding 1985 award is concerned I am able to tell you that the UGC can find the sum necessary to compensate universities with medical schools for the difference between clinical and non-clinical pay awards.

As to the future, the Government agrees that clinical academics' pay should in principle be linked to NHS doctors' pay, which is settled following DDRB recommendations. The universities will not be given less favourable treatment than the Hospital and Community Health Service in any decisions to provide additional funds to meet additional costs arising from DDRB pay awards.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Peter Swinnerton-Dyer.

Yours ever
Keith

Remuneration of Teachers Act

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consideration he has given to the proposals made to him by the Professional Association of Teachers for amending the Remuneration of Teachers Act.

Sir Keith Joseph: I replied to the Professional Association of Teachers' proposals on 4 December 1985. I am sending the hon. Member copies of the correspondence.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether, further to his reply of 6 December 1985, *Official Report*, columns *363-4*, he has yet received any detailed submissions from the local authority associations on the reform of the teachers' pay machinery.

Sir Keith Joseph: I am now considering a submission which the local authority associations and the local authorities' conditions of service advisory board sent me on 3 February 1986.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has to extend the postgraduate certificate in education course for teacher training from one year to two years.

Mr. Chris Patten: None.

Higher Education

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many Republic of Ireland residents have obtained places in undergraduate courses in universities and colleges in England and Wales in the last five years for which figures are available; and what has been the estimated cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of first degree students from the Republic of Ireland on university, polytechnic and college courses in England and Wales and the estimated cost to public funds in each of the last five years were:

	Number of students	*Cost to public funds* £ million*
1980-81	124	0·3
1981-82	128	0·3
1982-83	120	0·4
1983-84	113	0·4
1984-85	149	0·5

* That is the cost to local education authorities as well as to the Exchequer.

Schools (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Devon;

(2) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Devon for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Devon by way of capital allocation for education;

(3) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Cornwall;

(4) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Cornwall for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Cornwall by way of capital allocation for education.

(5) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Somerset;

(6) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Somerset for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Somerset by way of capital allocation for education;

(7) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Avon;

(8) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Avon for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Avon by way of capital allocation for education;

(9) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Dorset;

(10) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Dorset for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Dorset by way of capital allocation for education;

(11) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Wiltshire;

(12) what is the captial allocation for voluntary aided schools in Wiltshire for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Wiltshire by way of capital allocation for education;

(13) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Lancashire;

(14) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Lancashire for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Lancashire by way of capital allocation for education;

(15) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Lincolnshire;

(16) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Lincolnshire for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Lincolnshire by way of capital allocation for education.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

School Meals

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he proposes to obtain and publish statistics on the take-up of school meals in maintained schools in England for the school year 1985-86.

Sir Keith Joseph: A census of the take-up of school meals in local education authorities in England is normally held annually in October. However it was not possible to collect representative figures in October and figures collected at a different time in the year would not be comparable with those for earlier years. Local education authorities are however being asked, as usual, for information on their prices and the use of their discretionary powers.

EMPLOYMENT

Community Programme (Employees' Wages)

Mr. Steel asked the Paymaster General (1) what representations he has received on the review of the average wage for community programme employees;

(2) when the review of the average wage for community programme employees will be complete; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: A number of representations have been received from hon. Members and others. We keep under continuous review the level of the average wage and other approved costs which can be reimbursed under the community programme and make changes whenever this would improve the cost effective use of taxpayers' money.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Terlezki asked the Paymaster General what steps he is taking to seek to reduce over-recording in the monthly unemployment count.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have announced today that, at the request of the Department's statisticians, I have agreed that the compilation and publication of the monthly unemployment statistics will take place some two weeks later than at present. The changes will produce a more accurate count of unemployed claimants and enable a more complete view to be taken of latest labour market developments. The revised arrangements will be introduced for the March figures, which will now be published on 16 April. Details of the reasons for the change have been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

International Military Services

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Defence who is the present non-executive Chairman of the International Military Services; and when he was appointed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Mr. K. H. Walley, 10 April 1985.

Anti-tank Weapons

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for Swingfire and for the further provision of long range anti-tank weapons for armoured units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Swingfire missiles, mounted on Striker CVR(T) vehicles, are planned to remain in service with armoured reconnaissance regiments until replaced by Long Range TRIGAT from the mid-1990s. However, we have concluded that retention of Swingfire mounted on the older FV 438 vehicle would not be the best use of resources, and have decided that it should be withdrawn from service this year.

Tanks

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to seek to increase the number of tanks in use for training purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The provision of tanks in use for training is reviewed from time to time taking into account, inter alia, the changing balance of the fleet with the introduction of Challenger. The introduction of Challenger is releasing front-line Chieftains for other possible tasks and this may permit the redeployment of some to training tasks.

RAF Establishments

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many RAF establishments there are in the United Kingdom and overseas; and what is his estimate of the value of their buildings, facilities and stores.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The number of establishments in which the Royal Air Force has the major interest is at present 128, comprising 57 RAF airfields in the United Kingdom and 10 overseas and 57 other RAF stations in the United Kingdom and four overseas. These figures exclude RAF units operating from non-RAF locations and stations in which the RAF does not have the major interest. No estimate is readily available on the value of RAF buildings, facilities and stores and the assembly of this information would involve a disproportionate amount of effort in both the Ministry of Defence and the Property Services Agency.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if, pursuant to the answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *912*, he will list those aspects of the strategic defence initiative which were discussed at the meeting

between his Department's officials and Dr. Thompson of the department of artificial intelligence at Edinburgh university on 20 December 1985; what specific response his officials made to the points raised by Dr. Thompson regarding the attainability of appropriate physical and spatial conditions for testing certain aspects of strategic defence initiative research; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The discussion between officials and Dr. Thompson on 20 December 1985 identified the topics on which a further meeting with a group of staff from the department of artificial intelligence at Edinburgh university might concentrate. It was not the purpose of the meeting on 20 December to give responses to the points raised by Dr. Thompson.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the strategic defence initiative office to write to university vice-chancellors outlining areas of research of interest to strategic defence initiative planners; what form the letters will take; what discussions have already taken place with universities about an outline list of research projects; what will be the deadline for universities to submit proposals; and when he expects contracts to be awarded.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Universities will be kept fully informed along with other interested parties of opportunities for participation in the SDI research programme by correspondence and by the activities of the Department of Education and Science representative working within the SDI participation office in the Ministry of Defence. There are no deadlines in this process. The award of contracts will be determined by such factors as the nature and strength of any interest that is shown by individual universities and their capabilities in the relevant fields.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what precise role the United Kingdom strategic defence initiative office will play in channelling contracts either with commercial companies involved in strategic defence initiative work or with the strategic defence initiative office in Washington; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The United Kingdom strategic defence initiative participation office, working together with Ministry of Defence staffs in the British Embassy, Washington, is available to help British companies obtain contracts in the US SDI research programme, within the context of the memorandum of understanding signed on 6 December 1985. As part of this process close contacts will be maintained with the US SDI organisation.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the implications for the scope, nature and costs of strategic defence initiative-related research in United Kingdom institutions of proposals arising from the American strategic defence initiative programme for the development of optical sensors, tracking devices and advanced electronic systems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As for all technologies open to the United Kingdom for participation through the SDI research programmes there are opportunities for considerable advances. Those potentially involved will take into account such benefits and the resource implications of undertaking such work.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the scope, objectives and cost of an SDI-related contract with Heriot Watt university for work on optical processing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The contract in question, of which I am aware, is a commercial matter between the parties concerned.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about the nature and purpose of approaches by the United States Navy to Brunel university regarding SDI-related research into laser gyroscopes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am aware of a general interest in the matter referred to, as one of many likely to feature as a possibility for United Kingdom participation in SDI research.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has about approaches by the United States strategic defence initiative office to United Kingdom institutions regarding possible research into X-ray lasers, high powered optical scans, laser communications, short wavelength lasers, composite materials, rocket fuels, electrochemical power sources, and the effect of clouds on beams; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The arrangements between the United States and United Kingdom Governments provide the opportunity for United Kingdom participation in SDI research in a number of advanced areas, of which some examples have been placed in the Library. The Ministry of Defence will assist United Kingdom companies or institutions who wish to participate in such research and have the capability to do so.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what formal contacts he has had with representatives of the Unionist parties since the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: I attended a meeting between the Prime Minister and a delegation from the Northern Ireland Assembly on Monday 25 November 1985. I regret that I have had no other formal contact. While I have made clear to the leaders of the Unionist parties that I am very ready to meet them at any time to hear their views on any of the issues discussed by the intergovernmental conference or on any other major policy question, I regret that they have not yet been able to accept my invitation.

Belfast Education and Library Board

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total Government budget allocation to the Belfast education and library board for each year since 1979, and the budget allocation for 1986-87;

(2) what effect the £1·6 million cut in the budget allocation to the Belfast education and library board will have on the level of provision by the board of *(a)* nursery schools and *(b)* nursery units.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Housing Budget

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what provisions are being made for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive waiting list in light of the £44 million cutback in the 1986-87 housing budget;

(2) what efforts are being taken to eliminate the 10·4 per cent. of housing in Northern Ireland deemed statutorily unfit by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question about housing finance in Northern Ireland on 29 January 1986. Measures to meet housing need and to improve housing conditions in Northern Ireland will continue to include new housebuilding in the private sector, including shared ownership under the co-ownership scheme, new housebuilding and improvements of existing dwellings by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and by housing associations, and improvements in the private sector with the assistance of house renovation grants.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what effect the £44 million cutback in the 1986-87 housing budget will have on jobs in the construction industry.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question about jobs in the construction industry on 29 January 1986 at column *544*. This remains the position.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many planned new home constructions will be cancelled due to the £44 million cutback in the 1986-87 housing budget;

(2) how many planned rehabilitation and major home improvement schemes will be cancelled due to the £44 million cutback in the 1986-87 housing budget;

(3) to what extent improvement work on Northern Ireland Housing Executive homes will be discontinued due to the cutback in the 1986-87 housing budget.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to his question about housing finance in Northern Ireland on 29 January 1986 at column *544*. It is for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to propose in the first instance how the resources available to it in 1986-87 should be distributed over its capital and revenue programmes. I await the submission of its proposals for approval. Decisions about individual schemes within approved programmes are matters for the Housing Executive.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many new homes will be built in Northern Ireland by the Housing Executive outside of Belfast in 1986-87;

(2) how many new homes will be built in Northern Ireland by the Housing Executive in 1986-87 in *(a)* Fermanagh, *(b)* Cookstown, *(c)* Omagh and *(d)* Dungannon council areas.

Mr. Needham: Until the Housing Executive has completed work on its budgets and programmes for 1986-87 and obtained my Department's approval it will not be possible to provide the information requested. I shall write to the hon. Member when the full details are available from the Housing Executive.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total number of unemployment benefit claimants, the percentage of the work force unemployed and the number of new unemployment benefit claimants in December and January;

(2) What was the total number of male unemployment benefit claimants, the percentage of the male work force unemployed and the number of new male unemployment benefit claimants in December and January.

Dr. Boyson: The information is as follows:

Unemployed claimants in Northern Ireland

	*Number**		*Unemployment Rate (per cent)†*		*New Claimants‡*	
	Total	*Males*	*Total*	*Males*	*Total*	*Males*
December 1985	121,470	88,605	20·9	26·7	10,404	6,545
January 1986	125,705	91,591	21·6	27·6	10,495	6,262

* Figures relate to all unemployed claimants i.e. unemployed people claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit and National Insurance credits.

† The unemployment rate is calculated as the number unemployed as a percentage of employees in employment plus the unemployed.

‡ Figures on new claimants relate to the 4 weeks prior to the count dates on 12.12.85 and 9.1.86.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of people unemployed in Northern Ireland for *(a)* more than three months, *(b)* more than one year and *(d)* more than two years.

Dr. Boyson: The figures are:

Unemployed Claimants in Northern Ireland at 9 January 1986

Duration of Unemployment	*Number**
(a) More than 3 months	100,191
(b) More than 6 months	80,587
(c) More than 1 year	60,317
(d) More than 2 years	40,826

* Figures are not mutually exclusive; for example those unemployed more than 1 year are included in the number unemployed more than 3 months.

SCOTLAND

Education Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of education spending by his Department for each of the last five years expressed as a proportion of the gross domestic product.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is given in the following table:

Percentage of Scottish GDP represented by Central Government expenditure on education within the responsibility of the Secretary of State

Year	*Percentage*
1980-81	1·07
1981-82	1·07
1982-83	0·96
1983-84	0·91
1984-85	0·88

Examination Markers

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of Scottish Certificate of Education examination markers appointed for the 1986 diet of examinations in the following categories *(a)* full-time teachers, *(b)* part-time teachers, *(c)* retired teachers, *(d)* lecturers, and *(e)* retired lecturers.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have asked the Scottish Examination Board to write to the hon. Member with this information as soon as possible.

Road Schemes

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why 1/2500 scale engineering drawings of road schemes in Scotland are not provided to objectors who request them.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department displays engineering drawings at public exhibitions of road proposals and makes them available for discussion at consultations with objectors. However, they are not provided to objectors for retention because of the very considerable expenditure which this would involve, though a request to furnish them on payment would always be considered.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland why feasibility studies for roads are not provided on request to objectors to road proposals in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Feasibility studies form an early stage in the consideration of options leading to the publication by the Scottish Development Department relating to a preferred route. While my officials are always prepared to provide information from them, where possible, in reply to specific inquiries from objectors, it would both be costly and in our view unjustifiably widen local uncertainty to make such studies available in full.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether there are items of information which his Department does not provide on request to objectors to trunk road proposals in Scotland which are provided on request to objectors to trunk road schemes in England and Wales after publication of a line order.

Mr. Ancram: This will require consultation with the Department and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as I am in a position to do so.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the position in regard to provision of information to objectors to trunk road schemes in Scotland to bring it into line with practice in England and Wales.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department takes account of the relevant procedures of other trunk road authorities in normal course, but if the hon. Member has any particular point in mind perhaps he would write to me about it.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department uses the Department of Transport manual of environmental appraisal in road appraisal.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. The manual is used when it is considered appropriate.

Higher Education

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Republic of Ireland residents have obtained places in undergraduate courses in universities and colleges in Scotland in the last five years for which figures are available; and what has been the estimated cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The numbers of undergraduate students from the Republic of Ireland in universities and colleges in Scotland in the last five years and the estimated cost to the Exchequer are given in the following table:

	Students from the Republic of Ireland on Undergraduate Courses in Scotland	
	Number of Students	*Estimated cost to Exchequer in that year* £
1980-81	13	36,000
1981-82	16	46,000
1982-83	17	58,000
1983-84	14	49,000
1984-85	14	52,000

Abortions

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many legal abortions were carried out in Scotland in each year since 1968; how many were in National Health Service premises; how many in approved clinics; and how many there were in each health region.

Mr. John MacKay: The available information is set out in the table:

Abortions by health board of treatment and type of premises—Scotland 1968-84

Year	Health board of treatment															
	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanarkshire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles	Scotland
1968 total	118	96	—	37	28	48	217	293	96	70	376	—	—	156	9	1,544
NHS hospitals	118	96	—	35	28	43	213	267	96	70	364	—	—	156	9	1,495
Approved clinics	—	—	—	2	—	5	4	26	—	—	12	—	—	—	—	49
1969 total	224	155	—	75	98	122	492	697	196	170	928	2	—	391	6	3,556
NHS hospitals	224	155	—	69	98	116	492	657	196	170	916	2	—	388	6	3,489
Approved clinics	—	—	—	6	—	6	—	40	—	—	12	—	—	3	—	67
1970 total	441	280	—	117	257	177	585	1,046	258	219	1,283	2	—	578	11	5,254
NHS hospitals	441	280	—	103	257	168	585	1,017	258	219	1,271	2	—	565	11	5,177
Approved clinics	—	—	—	14	—	9	—	29	—	—	12	—	—	13	—	77
1971 total	501	343	—	182	216	219	770	1,316	279	250	1,513	—	—	738	6	6,333
NHS hospitals	501	343	—	167	216	217	742	1,316	279	250	1,483	—	—	729	6	6,249
Approved clinics	—	—	—	15	—	2	28	—	—	—	30	—	—	9	—	84
1972 total	533	377	—	173	445	283	954	1,523	369	239	1,742	4	3	947	17	7,609
NHS hospitals	533	377	—	160	445	277	920	1,523	369	239	1,704	4	3	939	17	7,510
Approved clinics	—	—	—	13	—	6	34	—	—	—	38	—	—	8	—	9
1973 total	499	397	—	157	522	261	1,002	1,372	390	294	1,688	6	4	945	5	7,542
NHS hospitals	499	397	—	143	522	252	970	1,370	390	294	1,663	6	4	939	5	7,454
Approved clinics	—	—	—	14	—	9	32	2	—	—	25	—	—	6	—	88
1974 total	537	423	—	167	505	271	1,106	1,383	393	346	1,574	4	1	846	12	7,568
NHS hospitals	537	423	—	155	505	263	1,086	1,320	393	346	1,551	4	1	840	12	7,436
Approved clinics	—	—	—	12	—	8	20	63	—	—	23	—	—	6	—	132
1975 total	555	331	—	148	508	261	1,100	1,309	334	339	1,541	6	2	879	14	7,327
NHS hospitals	555	331	—	123	508	259	1,088	1,223	334	339	1,511	6	2	879	14	7,172
Approved clinics	—	—	—	25	—	2	12	86	—	—	30	—	—	—	—	155
1976 total	492	294	—	158	492	274	1,036	1,400	389	327	1,496	2	2	843	14	7,219
NHS hospitals	492	294	—	128	492	265	1,028	1,290	389	327	1,477	2	2	841	14	7,041
Approved clinics	—	—	—	30	—	9	8	110	—	—	19	—	—	2	—	178
1977 total	504	360	—	157	489	273	1,004	1,444	387	309	1,551	—	1	842	13	7,334
NHS hospitals	504	360	—	143	489	266	983	1,317	387	309	1,527	—	1	840	13	7,139
Approved clinics	—	—	—	14	—	7	21	127	—	—	24	—	—	2	—	195
1978 total	518	362	—	171	507	288	1,040	1,271	357	408	1,662	1	1	846	19	7,451
NHS hospitals	518	362	—	146	507	281	1,020	1,139	357	408	1,650	1	1	842	19	7,251
Approved clinics	—	—	—	25	—	7	20	132	—	—	12	—	—	4	—	200
1979 total	552	479	—	187	512	308	952	1,320	213	503	1,782	—	5	950	21	7,784
NHS hospitals	552	479	—	154	512	304	920	1,223	213	503	1,762	—	5	944	21	7,592
Approved clinics	—	—	—	33	—	4	32	97	—	—	20	—	—	6	—	192
1980 total	492	586	—	196	501	314	885	1,392	229	378	1,909	—	5	1,003	15	7,905
NHS hospitals	492	586	—	183	501	310	845	1,316	229	378	1,871	—	5	991	15	7,722
Approved clinics	—	—	—	13	—	4	40	76	—	—	38	—	—	12	—	183
1981 total	511	614	—	209	523	362	1,191	1,760	301	359	2,108	—	8	1,048	13	9,007
NHS hospitals	511	614	—	191	523	347	1,153	1,665	301	359	2,088	—	8	1,038	13	8,811
Approved clinics	—	—	—	18	—	15	38	95	—	—	20	—	—	10	—	196
1982 total	430	510	—	204	518	389	1,047	1,738	298	339	1,938	—	2	998	14	8,425
NHS hospitals	430	510	—	199	518	339	992	1,645	298	339	1,909	—	2	992	14	8,187
Approved clinics	—	—	—	5	—	50	55	93	—	—	29	—	—	6	—	238
1983 total	507	536	—	200	516	371	1,089	1,563	378	396	1,891	—	1	997	14	8,459
NHS hospitals	507	536	—	185	516	341	1,038	1,492	378	396	1,861	—	1	992	14	8,257
Approved clinics	—	—	—	15	—	30	51	71	—	—	30	—	—	5	—	202
1984 total	535	590	—	251	579	398	1,213	1,840	394	398	1,945	—	1	951	12	9,107
NHS hospitals	535	590	—	243	579	369	1,146	1,754	394	398	1,922	—	1	946	12	8,889
Approved clinics	—	—	—	8	—	29	67	86	—	—	23	—	—	5	—	218

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many beds were approved for non-National Health Service abortions in each of the health regions for each year from 1968 to 1985.

Mr. John MacKay: The information is set out in the table. No beds have been approved in the other health board areas.

Year	Health Board Areas						Total
	Dumfries & Galloway	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Lothian	Tayside	
1968	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1969	1	2	—	—	4	4	11
1970	1	2	2	—	—	2	7
1971	1	2	2	—	3	2	10
1972	1	2	2	—	3	2	10
1973	1	2	2	2	3	2	12
1974	1	2	2	2	3	2	12

Year	Health Board Areas						Total
	Dumfries & Galloway	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Lothian	Tayside	
1975	1	2	2	2	3	2	12
1976	2	2	2	2	2	2	12
1977	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
1978	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
1979	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
1980	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
1981	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
1982	1	2	2	2	2	1	10
1983	1	2	2	5	2	1	13
1984	1	2	2	5	2	1	13
1985	1	2	3	5	6	1	18

Cervical Screening

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for each hospital board area in Scotland the availability of cervical smear services; and how far they are meeting demand.

Mr. John MacKay: All Scottish health boards provide facilities for the screening of cervical smears, and priority is given to patients when a smear is required on clinical grounds. Due to an increasing demand for routine smears, backlogs have occurred in one or two areas and the health boards concerned are considering what steps to take to reduce the delays that have arisen because of this.

Patient Statistics

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were *(a)* the total number of patients, *(b)* the number in each of the following age ranges (i) under two years, (ii) two to four years, (iii) five to nine years, (iv) 10 to 15 years, (v) 16 to 18 years, (vi) 19 to 64 years, (vii) 65 to 74 years and (viii) 75 years plus, *(c)* the number of patients per 100,000 population and *(d)* the number of persons under 16 years; what is *(e)* the number of persons aged under 16 years per 100,000 population, *(f)* the number of adults over 16 years of age and *(g)* the number of adults over 16 years of age per 100,000 population in hospitals for the mentally handicapped in Scotland for each year from 1976 to 1986-87, giving estimated figures where actual figures are not yet available.

Mr. John MacKay: This information is as follows:

Residents as at 31 December in mental handicap hospitals by age and year of residence 1976-84, showing numbers and rates per 100,000 population for selected age groups

Age in Years (Numbers)

	0-2	2-4	5-9	10-15	16-18	19-64	65-74	75+	0-15	16+	Total
1976	8	30	225	694	409	5,035	485	139	957	6,068	7,025
1977	7	36	192	638	408	5,042	486	149	873	6,085	6,958
1978	7	34	144	577	403	5,020	497	162	762	6,082	6,844
1979	3	29	130	513	387	4,971	516	174	675	6,048	6,723
1980	3	12	99	460	380	4,944	538	196	574	6,058	6,632
1981	2	16	84	379	370	4,919	553	215	481	6,057	6,538
1982	4	15	73	312	331	4,887	556	246	404	6,020	6,424
1983	6	14	53	259	277	4,773	541	253	332	5,844	6,176
1984	3	14	51	214	231	4,636	539	275	282	5,681	5,963

Year of Residence (Rates per 100,000 population)

Age	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
0-15	71·1	66·5	59·6	54·1	47·1	40·5	34·8	29·3	25·5
16+	157·2	156·7	155·9	154·3	153·9	151·7	150·3	145·5	140·6
Total	135·0	133·9	132·1	130·1	128·7	126·2	124·3	119·9	115·9

Information for 1985 is not yet available and it is not possible to give meaningful estimates to 1986-87.

Community Residential Places

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the number of community residential places in Scotland for each year from 1976 to 1986-87, giving estimated figures where actual figures are not yet available; and if he will also give *(a)* the total number of residents, *(b)* the number of residents per 100,000 of the population and *(c)* the number of residents in each of the following age ranges: under two years, two to four years, five to nine years, 10 to 15 years, 16 to 18 years, 19 to 64 years, 65 to 74 years, and 75 plus years.

Mr. John MacKay: The totals of residential places and residents are as follows. The figures in table 1 reflect the way in which figures were made available for separate groups before data were computerised in 1980. It is not possible to provide realistic estimates for 1986 and 1987.

*Places and persons resident in local authority and registered accommodation**

Table 1 1976-79

	1976	1977	1978	1979
Places	23,004	23,401	23,237	23,061
Residents in:				
Children's homes and hostels				
Aged: 0- 2	4,981	234	158	113
3- 4		323	289	202
5-10		1,634	1,567	1,305
11-15		2,284	2,331	2,273
16+		407	346	384
List D Schools				
Aged: 10-18	1,355	1,510	1,414	1,366
Homes for mentally and physically handicapped and mentally ill				
Aged 16+	1,395	1,433	1,485	1,629
Homes for the elderly				
Aged: Under 65	12,929	13,264	727	574
65-74			2,282	2,131
75+			10,439	10,540
Total	20,660	21,089	21,038	20,517
Number of residents per 100,000 population	397	405	405	396

*The accommodation to which the figures relate includes List D schools but excludes certain short stay and hostel accommodation for addicts and offenders.

Table 2 1980-85

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	*1985
Places	22,885	22,748	22,448	21,907	21,656	21,780
Residents Age: Under 2	44	8	24	14	8	6
2- 4	195	112	68	47	30	23
5- 9	884	686	423	313	212	145
10-15	3,824	3,567	3,100	2,758	2,383	2,118
16-18	626	673	743	733	731	683
19-64	1,971	2,010	2,130	2,189	2,175	2,248
65-74	2,375	2,255	2,036	1,968	1,864	1,870
75+	10,354	10,816	10,648	10,856	11,458	11,930
Not known	345	122	324	331	379	145
Total	20,618	20,249	19,496	19,209	19,240	19,168
Number of residents per 100,000 population	399	393	376	372	374	373

*Provisional.

Costains (Yorkhill Contract)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will now give any estimate of the finishing date of the arbitration between the Greater Glasgow health board and Costains Ltd. over the extension to the hospital for sick children at Yorkhill, Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: The matters under arbitration are extremely complex and many factors may influence the length of time likely to be required. No estimate of a finishing date can prudently be offered at this stage.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum was spent in 1984-85 and what sum is provided for 1985-86 and for 1986-87 in the accounts of the Greater Glasgow health board to cover costs of repairs and remedial work to the sick children's hospital, Yorkhill, Glasgow, following the extension to the building constructed by Richard Costain (Construction) Ltd.

Mr. Rifkind: £106,204 was spent in 1984-85. It is estimated that the total for 1985-86 will be £146,500. No further expenditure is expected.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the current three-year lease on accommodation at Amicable House, 71 George street, in connection with the arbitration between the Greater Glasgow health board and Costains, is being renewed by central legal services; and if he will detail the rent and rates paid during this lease by the parties to the arbitration.

Mr. Rifkind: It is intended to renew the lease for a further period. The cost of rents and rates, shared equally by the parties to the arbitration are:

	Rent £	*Rates* £
1983-84	3,570	2,575
1984-85	8,000	5,355
1985-86	8,000	6,175

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many days the present arbitrator has sat re-hearing evidence first led before Mr. K. Cameron, QC before his appointment as Lord Advocate in connection with the dispute between the Greater Glasgow health board and Costains over the extension to the sick children's hospital at Yorkhill, Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: Four.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what sum was spent in 1984-85 and what provision has been made for 1985-86 and 1986-87 in respect of central

legal services for the arbitration between the Greater Glasgow Health Board and Costains arising from work on the sick children's hospital at Yorkhill, Glasgow; and how many staff in central legal services are engaged in the case.

Mr. Rifkind: £218,341 was spent in 1984-85. The allocation made to the Common Services Agency for the current financial year includes £502,000 for costs which might arise in connection with the arbitration. An allocation in respect of 1986-87 will be made shortly in the light of requirements.

Three of the agency's legal staff are engaged on the case. The number of staff supporting them varies from time to time.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many days the arbiter has sat in connection with the dispute between Richard Costain (Construction) Ltd. and the Greater Glasgow health board over the extension to the sick children's hospital, Glasgow since the first procedural hearing in May 1980; and on how many of these days evidence was taken.

Mr. Rifkind: The number of days is 137, on 114 of which evidence was taken.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if any tender or offer in settlement has been made in connection with the current arbitration between the Greater Glasgow health board and Costains Ltd. arising from work carried out on the hospital for sick children at Yorkhill, Glasgow.

Mr. Rifkind: Since the arbiter is considering the issues of liability and damage arising between the Greater Glasgow health board and Costains and these matters may in that sense be considered *sub judice*, it would be inappropriate for me to comment.

Physics Teaching

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish his correspondence with Mr. J. T. Jardine, chairman of the joint working party in physics for standard grade, concerning physics teaching in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: With Mr. Jardine's agreement, I am placing in the Library copies of his letter of 8 February to my right hon. and learned Friend and of the Scottish Education Department's response.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Deakins asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to secure proper management of the European Economic Community common agricultural policy; which European Economic Community institution is responsible for common agricultural policy management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Day-to-day management of the commodity regimes under the common agricultural policy is undertaken by the European Commission acting under powers given to it in regulations adopted by the Council of Ministers. These regulations require in many instances that drafts of its management regulations should first be put to the management committee on which member states' Governments are represented. If the management committee should give a negative opinion (expressed by qualified majority) the matter would normally be considered by the Council. The Commission's actions are also subject to scrutiny by the European Court of Auditors and to questioning by the European parliament.

In general the problems in the operation of the CAP have arisen not from the detailed management of the policy by the Commission but because the Council in taking decisions, especially on support prices, has not responded sufficiently to trends in agricultural production, and as a result surpluses have emerged which are difficult and costly to dispense of.

The United Kingdom Government will continue to press for a more market orientated and rational CAP which in the long term is in the interests of producers, as well as consumers and taxpayers.

Sweetening Agents

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest information available to him on the consumption per capita in the United Kingdom of sucrose, glucose and other calorific sweetening agents.

Mrs. Fenner: The latest readily available information for the United Kingdom is as follows:

*Supplies moving into human consumption† 1984**

	kg/head
Sucrose‡	38·0
Glucose‖	7·9
Other calorific sweetening agents	¶

* Provisional.

† Actual consumption will be less because of wastage and some will be in the form of manufactured foods. National food survey estimates for 1984 indicate household purchases of refined sugar at 13·5 kg/head.

‡ Includes an estimate for the sucrose content of net imports of manufactured foods but excludes sucrose used in the production of alcoholic drinks.

‖ Including glucose syrups.

¶ Supplies are relatively small and food use is restricted mainly to incorporation into diabetic foods.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. John Browne asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to the answer of 27 January, *Official Report*, column 404, he will make a statement as to the practical arrangements to be insisted on by Her Majesty's Government to combat the risk of the spread of rabies to the United Kingdom through the proposed Channel tunnel specifically by rats and bats.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government will require in the forthcoming discussions with the operators of the Channel fixed link adequate physical and other practical measures to minimise the risk of introducing rabies into this country. The specific arrangements which will be introduced will depend upon the outcome of the discussions.

Surplus Foodstuffs

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total tonnage of foodstuffs of all kinds, collectively, in private or public intervention

in the European Economic Community; and what was the collective total around the same date in each of the previous 10 years, respectively.

Mr. Jopling [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986, c. 2]: The information requested is set out in the table below:

*Year**	*Million tonnes*
1975	†...¶5·1
1976	†‖5·4
1977	†‡‖3·6
1978	‖3·4
1979	‖7·4
1980	‡‖10·0
1981	‖7·6
1982	‖12·2
1983	‖14·0
1984	•9·8
1985	•9·3

* Generally end December each year.

† Excluding public intervention stocks of olive oil, information on which is not available.

‡ Excluding pigmeat in assisted private storage, information on which is not available.

‖ Including feed wheat which cannot be separately identified in those years.

¶ Excluding butter and cheese in assisted private storage, information on which is not available.

• In addition stocks of wheat bought in at the intervention price for feed grain were 3·1 million tonnes in 1984 and 6·9 million tonnes in 1985 and a proportion of these was of milling quality.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Stanley Royd Hospital

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his statement of 21 January, *Official Report*, column *193*, on the report of the enquiry into the salmonella poisoning outbreak at Stanley Royd hospital, Wakefield, if he will make a statement on his discussions with the district and regional health authority chairmen concerned and on the action which they have been asked to take as a result.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend and I had meetings with the chairman of Yorkshire regional health authority and the chairman of Wakefield health authority on 23 January. The main purposes of the meetings were to emphasise the seriousness of what had occurred and our determination that there should be no recurrence. They gave their commitment to making speedy reports of action taken and to be taken by both authorities on all matters in the report calling for responses.

Pharmacists

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action he intends to take following discussions which his Department is having with representatives of pharmacists concerning excess profits accruing to certain pharmacists through the importation and sale of discounted drugs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the monitoring of payments made to dispensing pharmacists in the light of the information sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South.

Mr. Hayhoe: Retail pharmacists are reimbursed the cost of the drugs they use in dispensing National Health Service presciptions. Each receives the actual wholesale cost of the drug used less a stratified average discount which the pharmacist is deemed to be able to obtain.

The amount of the discount deduction is established by periodic statistical inquiries. The last such inquiry took place in 1981. My Department has already initiated discussions with the pharmacists' representatives, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee, about a further enquiry which would identify all the various forms of discount available in the market.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning the proposals in the White Paper on social security as they affect students.

Mr. Newton: Since publication of the White Paper we have received approximately 346 written representations and inquiries regarding these proposals.

Child Prostitution

Mr. Alexander asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the provision made for the rehabilitation of children involved in prostitution.

Mr. Whitney: Statutory and voluntary organisations provide a variety of services for children in need including those involved in prostitution. These would include counselling, family support and sometimes specialist accommodation.

Homelessness and Children in Care

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what study his Department has made of the relationship between homelessness and the reception of children into care.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has a continuing active programme of research into child care matters. Research into the possible links between homelessness, bad housing and reception of children into care has to be considered in the light of competing demands for limited resources. A study by Dr. Packman of Exeter university just completed included amongst other variables the housing situation of a sample of children entering care and of children considered for care but not received at that time. There are no plans for additional research in this area at present.

North-East Thames RHA (Capital Works)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the value of the major capital works undertaken and currently planned in the last five years by the North-East Thames regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The value of major capital schemes, each costing over £5 million, completed in the North-East Thames region during the period 1981-85 is £63·4 million.

At present, the estimated value of such schemes either in planning or under construction is £56 million.

Hospital Building Programme

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to accelerate the current hospital building programme.

Mr. Hayhoe: One of the Government's priorities for the National Health Service is the continuing development and modernisation of health service buildings. A substantial capital investment of £765 million in 1986-87 rising to £805 million in 1988-89 is being provided for this purpose, and this sum will be supplemented by the proceeds of sales of surplus land and buildings which health authorities will retain. These receipts are expected to increase markedly from the current level of £50 million a year. Higher investment together with improved value for money is bringing tangible benefits to patients—new hospitals and the refurbishment and upgrading of existing buildings.

At present in England 147 hospital schemes costing over £2 million each are being planned, designed or built which represents a commitment by the Government of over £1 billion. This programme will provide new hospital facilities in every region in the country.

Geriatric Care

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the current provision of geriatric care within the National Health Service, both nationally and in the county of Gloucestershire.

Mr. Whitney: Since 1978 expenditure on National Health Service care for elderly people has increased by over 20 per cent. in real terms. The specialty of geriatric medicine continues to expand—between 1978 and 1984 the numbers of consultant geriatricians and nurses working in departments of geriatric medicine increased by 34 per cent. and 18 per cent. respectively and the numbers of elderly persons treated as hospital inpatients and as outpatients increased by 47 per cent. and 35 per cent. respectively.

The South-Western regional health authority's strategic plan requires district authorities to give priority to the development of services for elderly people over the next 10 years. My hon. Friend may wish to contact the chairman of the Gloucester health authority and the Cheltenham and district health authority for details of current and planned provision in Gloucestershire.

Limited List Prescribing

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has had representations from the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of the United States of America about the limited list of drugs prescribed in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's policy on the selected list has been discussed at meetings between the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association and Ministers and officials. I have emphasised, and believe the association has accepted, that it was not intended to discriminate in any way against United States-owned companies, nor indeed against any other companies.

Hospitals (Hygiene Standards)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has estimated the cost of bringing National Health Service hospitals up to present public health standards; and whether he will make new money available for this purpose.

Mr. Hayhoe: I assume the hon. Member is referring to the standards required by the food hygiene legislation. On estimates of costs, I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke on Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 4 February at column *141*.

My right hon. Friend announced on 6 February at column *211* the Government's intention to bring forward legislation this Session to apply the food hygiene provisions of the Food Act 1984 to health authorities. Any extra costs should be met from within health authorities' existing allocations.

Child Care Law

Mr. Charles Morrison asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many responses he has so far received to his Department's consultation on its review of child care law; and, of these, how many referred to the need to establish a family court system.

Mr. Whitney: At 17 February, comments on the "Review of Child Care Law" had been received from 170 individuals and groups. Of these, 59 made reference to the need to establish a family court.

Patient Statistics

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each year from 1976 to 1986-87, giving estimated figures where actual figures are not yet available, for *(a)* the United Kingdom as a whole and *(b)* England: (i) the total number of patients, (ii) the number of patients in each of the following age ranges: under two years, two to four years, five to nine years, 10 to 15 years, 16 to 18 years, 19 to 64 years, 65 to 74 years and 75 plus years, (iii) the number of patients per 100,000 population, (iv) the number of under 16-year-olds, (v) the number of under 16-year-olds per 100,000 population, (vi) the number of adults over 16 years of age, and (vii) the number of adults over 16 years of age per 100,000 population in hospitals for the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Whitney: The available information for England is given in the tables. Statistics for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Table 1
Resident patients at 31 December in mental handicap hospitals and hospital units in England
Summary statistics

	Numbers			*Age specific rate per 100,000 population*		
Year	*All ages*	*0-15 years*	*16 years and over*	*All ages*	*0-15 years*	*16 years and over*
1976	48,959	4,263	44,696	105·6	38·0	127·1
1977	47,947	3,878	44,069	103·4	35·3	124·6
1978	46,863	3,287	43,576	101·1	30·4	122·6
1979	45,596	2,839	42,757	98·3	26·7	119·5

Year	Numbers: All ages	Numbers: 0-15 years	Numbers: 16 years and over	Age specific rate per 100,000 population: All ages	Age specific rate per 100,000 population: 0-15 years	Age specific rate per 100,000 population: 16 years and over
1980	44,444	2,421	42,023	95·6	23·1	116·7
1981	43,091	1,994	41,097	92·1	19·4	112·5
1982	41,712	1,629	40,083	89·1	16·1	109·2
1983	40,183	1,274	38,909	85·8	12·8	105·4
1984*	36,687	741	35,946	78·1	7·6	96·7

* The figures for 1984 may not be directly comparable with those for earlier years because the 1984 figures exclude residents in small NHS mental handicap units in the community, many of whom would have been included in the figures for earlier years but not in a separately identifiable form.

Table 2

Resident patients at 31 December in mental handicap hospitals and hospital units in England. Detailed age distribution.

Number

Year	Age (years): 0-1	2-4	5-9	10-15	16-18	19-64	65-74	75 and over
*1976	16	122	925	3,200	2,100	36,210	— 6,386 —	
*1977	9	110	811	2,948	2,177	35,373	— 6,519 —	
1978	9	76	637	2,565	2,214	34,704	4,731	1,927
1979	7	58	553	2,221	2,189	33,901	4,634	2,033
1980	6	57	471	1,887	2,019	33,396	4,538	2,070
1981	7	61	340	1,586	1,685	32,845	4,391	2,176
1982	7	61	295	1,266	1,496	32,172	4,201	2,214
1983	5	36	226	1,007	1,307	31,387	3,975	2,240
†1984	2	18	127	594	878	29,051	3,831	2,186

* Separate figures for the 65-74 and 75 and over age groups are not available.

† The figures for 1984 may not be directly comparable with those for earlier years because the 1984 figures exclude residents in small NHS mental handicap units in the community, many of whom would have been included in the figures for earlier years, but not in a separately identifiable form.

Community Residential Places

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the number of community residential places for (i) England and (ii) the United Kingdom as a whole, for each year from 1976 to 1986-87, giving estimated figures where actual figures are not yet available; and if he will also give *(a)* the total number of residents, *(b)* the number of residents per 100,000 of the population and *(c)* the number of residents in each of the following age ranges: under two years, two to four years, five to nine years, 10 to 15 years, 16 to 18 years, 19 to 64 years, 65 to 74 years and 75 plus years.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not available consistently in precisely the form requested but available figures for England are given in the table. Statistics for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Residential care in local authority and registered homes. Number of places and number of residents 1976-85

England

As at 31 March

	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Residential care for children in care										
Number of places*	33,895	34,081	33,498	33,426	31,691	..	..	..	..	..
Number of residents by age†										
Aged:										
under 1	..	172	137	141	100	66	55	51	33	n.a.
1 to 4	..	2,203	1,672	1,468	1,259	880	645	453	296	n.a.
5 to 9	..	6,409	5,687	5,112	4,639	3,694	2,662	1,912	1,293	n.a.
10 to 15	..	21,166	20,640	19,665	19,813	18,331	16,312	13,598	10,854	n.a.
16 to 17	..	5,943	6,222	6,379	6,524	6,675	6,583	6,024	5,612	n.a.
18 and over	..	89	130	149	145	104	96	93	78	n.a.
Total	38,200	35,982	34,488	32,915	32,480	29,750	26,353	22,131	18,166	n.a.
Other residential care‡										
Number of places	186,130	190,752	196,438	200,263	206,498	212,792	220,133	230,607	245,162	265,377
Number of residents by age‖										
Aged:										
under 16	1,675	1,782	1,881	1,810	1,887	1,837	1,762	1,771	1,642	1,697
16 to 64	23,290	24,414	26,221	27,139	27,573	28,897	30,131	31,565	31,740	31,328
65 and over	145,012	149,874	152,903	153,971	158,317	161,936	166,757	173,163	181,638	194,364
Total●	169,978	176,070	181,070	182,963	187,777	193,638	198,650	206,499	215,020	228,475
Total of above●										
Number of residents	208,178	212,052	215,558	215,878	220,257	223,388	225,003	228,630	233,186	n.a.
(per 100,000 population)	446·0	454·5	462·2	462·9	471·7	477·5	480·6	488·6	497·8	n.a.

* The figures refer to local authority maintained and controlled Community Homes only. There are no equivalent data from 1981 onwards.
† Children in Care accommodated in Community Homes provided under the Child Care Act 1980 and registered voluntary children's homes and hostels.
‡ Care provided in local authority and registered voluntary and private homes and hostels for the elderly, disabled, mentally ill and mentally handicapped.
‖ From 1981 the available data on the number of residents in voluntary and private homes for the mentally disordered relate only to those who are supported by local authorities.
¶ Includes newly available data, as at 31 December 1984, on the number of beds and residents in small NHS mental handicap units in the community.
• Some authorities were not able to supply age breakdowns and therefore the columns may not add to the totals.
■ Provisional.
.. Data not available.
n.a.—Data not available yet.

Nuclear Defence Establishments (Diseases)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any causal link has been established among people of all ages living near nuclear defence establishments and known diseases.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am advised that there is no such established causal link.

Heart Disease

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the cost to the National Health Service of coronary heart disease for the last year to a convenient date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Support

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much extra expenditure his Department would incur using the illustrative figures published in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691, if the income support personal allowance for single people aged 18 to 24 years were £30·60 per week.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 5 February 1986, c. *189-90*]: I regret that my answer contained some incorrect information. The minimum extra cost of increasing the income support personal allowance in the way proposed by the hon. Member would be of the order of £200 million to £250 million, and not £30 million to £40 million as stated in my reply.

NHS Expenditure

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the percentage cumulative growth of National Health Service expenditure each year since 1979 *(a)* in retail price index terms, *(b)* in terms of National Health Service pay and prices and *(c)* after taking account of the annually growing demand for health services; if he will give actual expenditure figures each year both in current and constant price terms in accordance with each of these three criteria; and if he will state the level of planned expenditure savings each year, both in current and constant price terms, together with the evidence on which these expenditure savings claims are based.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 February 1986, c. *217*]: The tables following provide the information for which the hon. Member asked at *(a)* and *(b)* but it is not appropriate to measure NHS expenditure by reference to movements in the retail price index; the appropriate measure of inflationary pressures in the economy as a whole is the GDP deflator.

Percentage cumulative growth of National Health Service Expenditure since 1979-80

	in retail price terms	*in terms of National Health Service Pay and Prices*
1980-81	+12·2	+2·5
1981-82	+12·8	+5·3
1982-83	+14·9	+7·0
1983-84	+16·2	+7·9
1984-85	+18·5	+8·9

Expenditure in the National Health Service £ Million

	*Cash expenditure**	*in retail price terms (1984-85)*	*in terms of National Health Service pay and prices (1984-85)*
1979-80	7,630	11,651	12,678
1980-81	9,954	13,070	12,999
1981-82	11,162	13,138	13,356
1982-83	12,177	13,383	13,569
1983-84	12,887	13,544	13,683
1984-85	13,805	13,805	13,805
1985-86	14,607	†	†

* Expenditure figures adjusted to reflect classification changes following the establishment of the NHS Management Board and the changed status of Family Practitioner Committees.
† Not yet calculable.

Part *(c)* of the question cannot readily be answered on comparable basis. Expenditure on family practitioner services has been increased on line with demand. As for hospital and community health services, it is estimated that between 1979-80 and 1985-86 demand has risen by 4 per cent. as a result of demographic changes. These services have also accommodated the effects of medical advance. They have done so by improved efficiency, a factor which with authorities' growing cost improvement programmes is playing an increasing part also in developing services and remedying existing deficiencies. Such improvements are not, as the question implies, expenditure savings, since more clinical activities are enabled to be financed from a given level of resources. The following table presents the estimated efficiency savings and planned cost improvements that have been achieved since 1981-82.

Health and Community Health Services Cost Improvements £ Million

	Cash equivalent	*in terms of Retail Price Index (1984-85)*	*in terms of HCHS pay and prices (1984-85)*
1981-82	15	18	18
1982-83	25	27	28
1983-84	42	44	44
1984-85	107	107	107
1985-86	150	*	*

* Not yet calculable.

The figures for 1981-82 and 1982-83 are taken from regional health authorities' reports on cash savings achieved. In 1983-84 all RHAs were expected to achieve efficiency savings of some 0·5 per cent., but my Department did not call for detailed reports of achievement. From 1984-85 it has been the practice that RHAs agree cost improvement programmes before the year begins and report on their achievement. The totals planned for 1984-85 were delivered and those for 1985-86 are on course.

Single Payments

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* comparable statistics on the total amount paid out in single payments to claimants in different areas, based on the smallest convenient geographical areas, and on the most recent convenient dates.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *364-5*]: The table giving the information requested by the hon. Member has now been placed in the Library.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Authority Employees (Overtime)

6. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of the total cost of overtime worked by local authority employees.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information is not collected centrally.

Sunderland District Council (Housing)

15. **Mr. Clay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been his Department's allocation, at current prices, to Sunderland district council for housing expenditure for each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Sunderland's housing investment programme allocation for 1986-87 is £5 million, the same figure as in 1985-86. At 1985-86 prices, the allocations for the previous years since 1978-79 have been as follows: £20·1 million, £17·1 million, £12·6 million, £6·4 million, £9·5 million £7·6 million, £6·5 million. As the volume of council house sales has increased local authorities have been able to add to their spending power by drawing on their capital receipts. In the last financial year Sunderland's actual expenditure was £14·3 million — more than double the HIP allocation.

Local Authority Housebuilding

16. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses were completed by local authorities in the years 1979 and 1985.

Sir George Young: Local authorities completed 67,000 dwellings in 1979. The provisional estimate for 1985 is 22,000.

Homesteading

17. **Mr. Steen** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on homesteading; and if he will make a statement as to the number of units homesteaded in England and Wales in each of the last three years.

Sir George Young: We introduced homesteading to enable local authorities to dispose of substandard properties at advantageous terms, to people prepared to improve them. It remains a useful low cost route to home ownership for those who are able and willing to carry out the necessary work, which we wish to encourage.

In England for the last three financial years for which figures are available the number of disposals notified to us under Homesteading schemes has been:

	Number
1982-83	1,500
1983-84	980
1984-85	860

Homesteading in Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

18. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received following his statement to the House about the proposed privatisation of water authorities.

22. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the number of representations he has received, respectively, in favour of and against the Government's proposals to privatise the water authorities.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My Department has received 23 letters from organisations and others interested following publication of the White Paper. It is for those responding to publicise their views, if they so wish.

Widdicombe Inquiry

19. **Mr. Phillip Oppenheim** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects the Widdicombe inquiry on local government to publish its final report.

Mr. Waldegrave: I understand that the Widdicombe committee of inquiry is aiming to submit its final report in about two months' time. The report will be published as soon as possible thereafter.

Nugee Committee (Report)

20. **Sir Hugh Rossi** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to complete his consideration of the Nugee committee's recommendations on the management of privately owned blocks of flats.

46. **Sir Geoffrey Finsberg** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to announce the Government's response to the findings of the Nugee committee on the management of privately owned blocks of flats.

Mr. John Patten: I shall announce the Government's response to this important report as soon as I have considered its recommendations in consultation with colleagues.

Council House Sales

21. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide the most up-to-date figures as to the number of local authority houses and flats sold under the tenants' statutory right to buy, giving also the corresponding figures for Leicester; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: A total of 496,000 dwellings, including 17,000 flats, are estimated to have been sold by local authorities in England under the right to buy between October 1980 and September 1985. A total of 4,030 houses and 10 flats were reported as sold by Leicester city council. (These figures exclude sales by agreement on terms equivalent to the right to buy).

In order to encourage the sale of flats, the Housing and Planning Bill provides for tenants buying flats to have higher discounts and better protection against unexpected service charges.

25. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants since May 1979.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 22 January 1986, at column *225*.

Defective Housing (Repair and Replacement)

23. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the assistance being given by Her Majesty's Government to local housing authorities concerned with the repair and replacement of defective houses.

Mr. John Patten: Gross provision for local authority capital spending in 1986-87 has been increased by £200 million to £2,532 million, to help authorities give increasing priority to tackling the repair and renovation-work needed to their stock. In addition a new indicator, based on the results of the Department's stock condition inquiry, was introduced into the generalised needs index used to distribute housing resources for 1986-87. Particular account has also been taken of the difficulties some authorities are facing in meeting obligations under the Housing Defects Act by modifying the defective dwellings indicator within the GNI and also by distributing £30 million outside the GNI to those regions containing authorities likely to experience the greatest difficulties.

Local Government Reform

24. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any discussions with the chairman of the London Residuary Body about job prospects for Greater London council employees.

Mr. Tracey: This is one of the matters my right hon. Friend discusses with the chairman from time to time.

Tenants' Charter

26. **Mr. Rooker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the operation of the consultation process within the tenants' charter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities are free to decide what in their opinion are matters of housing management on which they must consult their secure tenants, and on the means of consultation. I am aware that in some local authorities consultation is said to be minimal. I am keen to see the dissemination of good practices among local authorities leading to greater involvement by tenants.

"Paying for Local Government"

27. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government."

28. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the environment what reaction there has been so far from members of the public to his Department's Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government"; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had in response to publication of the Green Paper entitled "Paying for Local Government".

31. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the proposals for non-domestic rates in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

33. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what initial responses he has received to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government" so far.

39. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received in response to his Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Members and my hon. Friends to the reply my hon. Friend gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow).

50. **Mr. Evans** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next proposes meeting the local authority associations in order to discuss the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: We have proposed that the Green Paper should be on the agenda for the meeting of the consultative council on local government finance on 12 March.

51. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now extend the consultation period in respect of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. While it would still be helpful to have earlier comments, my right hon. Friend has written to the local authority associations, the Confederation of British Industry and the Association of British Chambers of Commerce informing them that, with the exception of the proposals on capital expenditure, he is prepared to extend the consultation period in England to 1 October 1986.

54. **Mr. Ryman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from local authorities in response to the proposals on capital expenditure contained in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: It is too soon to assess the response. The consultation period does not close until 14 April.

62. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to publish all responses to the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Waldegrave: We shall publish an analysis of the responses we have received at the end of the consultation period and place it in the Library.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for the environment if he will give details of the studies which have led to the view on the likelihood of evasion of a community charge expressed in paragraph G.22 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Green Paper acknowledges that taxes levied on immovable property are the easiest to collect. But evasion rates of other taxes such as income tax, are still low overall. While the community charge was being phased in, an element of rates would remain. This would carry over some of the operational strengths of the old system while the new system was settling down. As well as undertaking canvasses of their areas authorities would be able to draw on the many other sources of information available to them in compiling the community charge register.

Schoolchildren (Lunchtime Supervision)

30. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is giving to local authorities on disregarding for the purposes of grant penalties in 1985-86 and 1986-87 the cost of lunchtime supervision.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have received representations under section 8(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1982 that expenditure on midday supervision during 1985-86 should be disregarded. I am considering these sympathetically. Since I have abolished targets and penalties, disregards are no longer appropriate in 1986-87.

Liverpool (Housing Programme)

32. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had recently with Liverpool city council about the housing programme.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have had no recent discussions with the city council about its housing programme. Officials of my Merseyside task force met Liverpool councillors and their officers on 12 December 1985 to discuss the council's housing investment programme. Similar meetings were held with all other housing authorities in the task force area.

Planning Consents

34. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to prohibit the granting of planning consent for building in respect of land which the applicant does not own and has made no attempt to acquire.

Mr. Tracey: No. It is quite reasonable for potential developers to be able to test whether their proposals are acceptable in planning terms before seeking to acquire the land in question.

General Development Order

35. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to amend the general development order in such a way as to lower the current limit of 5,000 sq. ft. on the area of new agricultural buildings permitted every two years on an agricultural holding; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: No. We have published a number of proposals for changes to the general development order in respect of farm developments, but they do not include proposals to reduce the permitted size limits.

Rugby Union

36. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet officials of the Rugby Football Union and the Welsh Rugby Union.

Mr. Tracey: I have no plans for formal meetings with officials of the Rugby Football Union or the Welsh Rugby Union.

Urban Environment

37. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to encourage public sector owners of unused and unuseable land in urban areas to enter into agreements with voluntary bodies involved in investment and improvement of the environment.

Mr. John Patten: I believe that voluntary organisations have a valuable part to play in helping to bring underused public land back into use and we are already examining ways of encouraging them to do so. Towards the end of 1984 my Department set up a pilot study to identify the scope for and ways of promoting and encouraging the involvement of voluntary organisations in this task. The study covers certain British Rail sites in the north-west and south-west of England and was organised with the help of the National Council for voluntary Organisations. It is too early to reach any firm conclusions from the results so far.

Repair Grants

38. **Mr. Allen McKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about how many local authorities are no longer accepting new applications for repair grants.

Sir George Young: Responsibility for administering the home improvement grant system rests with local authorities. We do not collate information in the form requested on the practices of individual authorities in accepting grant applications.

Council House Rents

40. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimates his Department makes of the potential impact on council house rents of a reduced number of local authority dwellings leading to the servicing of debt charges by a smaller number of tenants.

Mr. John Patten: Local authorities have discretion in setting rents for their housing. Sales of local authority dwellings give rise to capital receipts which, if not used to finance new capital expenditure, can be used to pay off outstanding loan debt. Alternatively they will earn interest, which must be credited to the housing revenue account. These various factors balance each other and, although their net impact will vary from authority to authority, it is not likely to be large.

Wildlife Inspectorate

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the disciplinary procedures instituted against a member of the Wildlife Inspectorate and his superior officer, referred to in the reply to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on 17 December 1985, *Official Report*, columns *107-8*.

Mr. Waldegrave: Technically, the inspector and his superior are not civil servants. But, in the interests of equity, my department considered it right to deal with hese cases in accordance with the normal Civil Service disciplinary procedures. Accordingly, they were formally informed of the criticisms of them and offered the opportunity to respond in writing or at an interview before the decision was taken on what disciplinary action should be taken.

The inspector and his superior have accepted the findings of the departmental investigation, which were given in my reply of 17 December at columns 107-8. In the light of those findings and the Director of Public Prosecution's earlier conclusion, on the evidence available, that no criminal offence had been committed, my department considered that neither the removal of the inspector from the panel nor the termination of his superior's contract would be justified.

Disciplinary action against both men has now been taken. It is not normal Civil Service practice to disclose the details of disciplinary action.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to strengthen the management of the Wildlife Inspectorate following the investigation into complaints against members of the inspectorate and subsequent institution of disciplinary procedures referred to in the reply to the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. McNair-Wilson) on 17 December 1985, *Official Report*, columns *107-8*; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have authorised the setting up of a separate administrative unit to manage the Wildlife Inspectorate. The unit will be headed by a principal reporting to a new grade 6 post and will include an enforcement co-ordinator. It will control the activities of the inspectors engaged on work under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the endangered species legislation. The post of the chief wildlife inspector will be filled on a long-term contract. A new post for an inspector based at Heathrow is to be created to liaise with HM Customs and Excise and provide them with expert advice. New and comprehensive instruction to inspectors are in advance of state of preparation.

As I said in my statement of the 17 December last year I am satisfied that the measures adopted will strengthen management, and improve the performance of the inspectorate in protecting birds and endangered species.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will specify the nature of the enforcement duties carried out or to be carried out by the Wildlife Inspectorate, as distinct from the normal inspection duties of the inspectorate.

Mr. Waldegrave: The enforcement duties of the Wildlife Inspectorate are confined to the initial identification of cases where there is a prima facie evidence of an offence under conservation legislation, and so providing expert advice on all ornithological, zoological and botanical matters to the appropriate enforcement agency when authorised to do so by the inspectorate administrative unit.

Urban Programme

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources he is proposing to make available under the urban programme in 1986-87 to the non-specifically designated districts.

Mr. John Patten: Despite the great pressure on public expenditure this year, the allocation for 1986-87 for industrial and commercial projects to be carried out by the other designated districts will be the same in cash terms as that for 1985-86. The total sum available for allocation is £8 million and the provisional allocation on a regional basis is:

		£ million
Northern	Hartlepool Langbaurgh	1·55
North West	Burnley Wigan	1·10
Merseyside	Sefton St. Helens	1·10
Yorkshire and Humberside	Barnsley Doncaster Rotherham	1·85
West Midlands	Walsall	0·55
Greater London	Ealing Haringey Southwark Newham Greenwich Lewisham	1·85

Allocations to individual authorities are made subject to the quality of individual projects submitted. Additional resources, over the above allocations, will be available to these authorities for approved urban development grant schemes.

Alexandra Palace

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make any financial assistance towards the completion of sports facilities at Alexandra palace.

Mr. Tracey: All Government money specifically allocated to sport is channelled through the Sports Council. The council is considering currently the case for supporting some of the development at Alexandra palace. The decision is entirely for the council to take in the light of their priorities and available resources.

Royal Palaces

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much of the £69,490,000

provided for in class VIII, 4 of the Supply Estimates 1985-86 is to be spent specifically on royal palaces; and what was the comparable figure for each of the last five years.

Sir George Young: Prior to 1 April 1985, expenditure for works on the royal palaces were included in class VIII vote 4. From 1 April 1985 the works expenditure is in class XIV vote I.

Expenditure on Royal Palaces

	1985-86	*1984-85*	*1983-84*	*1982-83*	*1981-82*	*1980-81*
Class VIII Vote 4* £	1,306,000	8,727,000	8,231,000	7,831,000	6,715,000	5,501,000
Class XIV Vote 1 £	*8,048,000					

*Provisional

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give a breakdown of the figure of £280,000 capital expenditure on royal palace furniture, and so on in 1985-86 as shown in Supply Estimates 1985-86 class VIII, 4 subhead detail.

Sir George Young: This sum was intended to include some expenditure on a new telephone exchange at Buckingham palace and the cost of furnishings and so on of the official residences of the royal household. The estimate has been revised downwards to £180,000 in the spring Supplementaries to take account of slippage in the programme for the provision of the new exchange.

Portsdown Park

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make his decision on whether to give consent to Portsmouth city council's scheme for Portsdown park.

Sir George Young: As soon as possible. Information supplementing the city council's original application reached my Department on 10 February and is being considered urgently. I hope that a response will be possible within a few days.

Tobacco Sponsorship

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what contact the Minister with responsibility for sport has had with the Tobacco Advisory Committee; and if he will list the tobacco companies' representatives he has met to discuss sports sponsorship.

Mr. Tracey: I have had informal discussions with the chief executive of the Tobacco Advisory Council and with representatives of Imperial Tobacco Ltd.

Housing Improvement Programme

41. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the housing improvement programme allocations.

Sir George Young: My Department has received about 50 representations about the housing investment programme allocations for 1986-87.

59. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the housing investment programme total allocation for 1986-87 as a percentage in real terms of the allocation in 1978-79.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme allocation total for 1986-87 is 30 per cent. in real terms of the allocation total for 1978-79. However, since 1981-82 authorities have been able to supplement their allocation by spending the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts.

Colliery Housing

42. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to increase the amount of public assistance available for the improvement of housing built for colliery workers between 1919 and 1939; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Government have no plans to give special assistance for the improvement of housing built for colliery workers. An application for a home improvement grant for such a house can be made to the local authority, in the same way as for other housing. Loans may be available through a European Coal and Steel Community scheme towards the costs of improving housing occupied by those working in the coal industry. Improvements may also be brought about through the involvement of a housing association or private developer.

GLC (Capital Receipts)

43. **Mr. John Fraser** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statment about the allocation of capital receipts held by the Greater London council.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer my right hon. Friend gave on the subject of balances generally to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 11 February.

Rating Reform

44. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he proposes to protect shire counties against loss of Government grant in the transition to the imposition of a community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am aware of the concern among shire counties but it is too early to say what the outcome of the rate support grant settlement for future years will be.

Afforestation and Nature Conservation

45. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made so far to the Nature Conservancy Council's draft report on afforestation and nature conservation.

Mrs. Rumbold: I understand NCC consulted over 60 organisations about this draft report including this

Department, who offered preliminary comments as part of the confidential consultation. I understand that the NCC hope to publish a final report in the spring.

Local Government Reform

47. **Mr. John Hunt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he has made to the representations from the London borough of Bromley regarding the level of grant payment for the upkeep of the highways to be transferred from the Greater London council to Bromley after abolition.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am consulting the local authority associations about how best to correct the problem identified by the London borough of Bromley. I hope to make a firm announcement of our intentions shortly.

Rate Support Grant

48. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received from shire county councils on the rate support grant for the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Preston (Mr. Thorne).

Local Authority Capital Expenditure

49. **Mr. Soley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes introducing legislation in the current Session in respect of local authority capital expenditure.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have asked for responses on capital controls to a shorter time scale than on the other proposals in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) so that early legislation can be sought if that seems desirable. But it would not be practicable to introduce legislation in the 1985-86 Session.

Housing Investment Programme

52. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the housing investment programme net of capital receipts for 1986-87 as a fraction in real terms of the programme for 1978-79.

Sir George Young: The net capital provision for housing investment by local authorities in 1986-87 is £1,097 million which is 32 per cent. in real terms of net capital expenditure in 1978-79. However, this comparison ignores the very large spending power which is now available to local authorities from capital receipts, and was not available in 1978-79.

Rating Reform

53. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the background studies undertaken by his Department on the feasibility of introducing a system of local government finance based on local income tax.

Mr. Waldegrave: Chapter 3 of the Green Paper summarises the reasons why we believe a local income tax would be undesirable.

Radioactive Waste Disposal

55. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report on the progress being made by the Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive into locating sites for the disposal of intermediate radioactive waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: The chairman of UK NIREX Ltd. wrote to my right hon. Friend on 8 January, setting out proposals for possible disposal sites for low and shorter-lived intermediate level radioactive wastes. These are currently being considered.

Improvement Grants

56. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on his policy on improvement grants, following the consultation period on the Green Paper.

Sir George Young: We are considering the comments we have received on the Green Paper, and expect to come forward with our conclusions and proposals in due course.

Home Improvement and Repair Grants

57. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total public expenditure on *(a)* mandatory and *(b)* discretionary home improvement and repair grants in 1984-85; and what is the estimated expenditure for 1985-86.

Sir George Young: In 1984-85 payments on *(a)* mandatory grants were £126 million and *(b)* on discretionary grants were £608 million. Expenditure on home improvement grants in 1985-86 is expected to be around £500 million. We cannot break this estimate down between mandatory and discretionary grants.

Leasehold Flats (Management)

58. **Mr. Knowles** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about statutory provisions relating to the management of leasehold blocks of flats.

Mr. John Patten: The committee on the management of privately owned blocks of flats chaired by Mr. E. C. Nugee QC presented its report on 14 November. I am considering its recommendations as quickly as possible.

Green Belt

60. **Mr. Soames** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy on planning and the green belt.

Mr. Tracey: The Government's policy is set out in the Department of the Environment's circular 14/84. It confirms that planning permission should not be given, except in very special circumstances, to develop land inside a green belt for purposes other than agriculture, sport, cemeteries, institutions standing in extensive grounds and other uses appropriate to rural area.

Housing Sales (Basildon)

61. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many houses Basildon council and development corporation have sold in each of the last four years.

Sir George Young: Dwelling sales in the years 1981-82 and 1982-83 reported by Basildon district council and development corporation appear in issues 63 and 67, respectively, of "Local Housing Statistics" and those in 1983-84 and 1984-85 are in issue 75: copies are available in the Library.

Local Government Services (Privatisation)

63. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet representatives of the local authorities to discuss progress on the privatisation of local government services.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has at present no plans for such discussions.

Leasehold Property (Insurance)

64. **Mr. Heddle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to give residents of leasehold property the right to choose the insurer of the property.

Mr. John Patten: We are looking at the insurance of leasehold dwellings in the course of considering the recommendations of the Nugee committee on the management of privately owned blocks of flats.

Berkshire Structure Plan

65. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in connection with his review of the Berkshire structure plan.

Mr. Tracey: A considerable number of representations has been received by my right hon. Friend both in support of and objecting to proposals in the replacement structure plan for Berkshire submitted to him by the county council on 9 January.

Rural Environment

66. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will take steps to protect the rural environment of hedges, hedgerows, walls and the wildlife of the adjacent environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes. The Countryside Commission and the Nature Conservancy Council have received substantial increases in their grants-in-aid to encourage sound conservation practices. Grants are also available under the agriculture improvement scheme for environmentally positive schemes including the planting of trees and hedges, and the building of traditional walls, banks and dykes.

Local Authority Expenditure

67. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the number of local authorities which will be deemed to have exceeded approved levels of expenditure in 1986-87 and of the number of authorities which appear to be overspending in the current year.

Mrs. Rumbold: No expenditure guidance figures for individual local authorities have been issued for 1986-87. At the time of the Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report (England) No. 2, published in December 1985, 94 English authorities were budgeting to spend above their expenditure guidance in 1985-86.

Rent Arrears

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to provide the detailed breakdown of gross rent arrears owed to each local authority, referred to in the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment on Monday 9 December, *Official Report*, column 468, to the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker); and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have put this information in the Library today. The hon. Member will be aware from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State's reply to the hon. Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) on 2 December—column 59—that rent arrears owed to local authorities in England have shown an appalling and unacceptable increase: Figures provided by local authorities to my Department indicate that on 1 April 1985, rent arrears totalled about £200 million, or 5·7 per cent. of the collectable rent in 1984-85. The figures excludes rates and service charges arrears.

Of the £200 million, £49 million was owed by former tenants and £149 million by current tenants. The situation is particularly alarming in inner London where arrears amount to over £57 million, or 16 per cent. Nationally performance varies enormously between comparable authorities as the figures given below demonstrate. Many authorities have commendably low arrears figures, often less tha 1 per cent. of collectable rent.

My Department and the Audit Commission are continuing to provide advice on good management practice and on training staff, but it is the local authorities which must act urgently to tackle this problem. As the Audit Commission has pointed out

". . . good management can affect a local situation even in the most difficult circumstances. More successful authorities can often have arrears 50 per cent. or more below the level of authorities facing similar socio-economic conditions".

I will be meeting the local authority associations to discuss what urgent steps can be taken to bring rent arrears under proper control. My Department is exploring the scope for more frequent and up to date monitoring of rent arrears.

The total arrears as at 1 April 1985 represented a £20 million increase on 1 April 1984 and a £38 million increase on 1 April 1983. Proportionally arrears have risen from 4·8 per cent. to 5·7 per cent. collectable rent over the same period.

Local Authority Rent Arrears (England) at April 1985

The tables below give details of the numbers of local authority dwellings at 1 April 1985, the total rent collectable between 1 April 1984 and 31 March 1985 (in £'s) and the rent owed by former and current tenants at 1 April 1985 (in £'s) by authority and class of authority. Except where noted, the figures are taken from the Department of Environment's housing subsidy claim forms returned by individual local authorities. They will be published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in the series "Housing Revenue Account Statistics —Actuals".

To facilitate comparisons between authorities, the ratio of the total rent arrears to the total rent collectable (expressed as a percentage) is also given.

The right-hand column on each table (headed "form used") indicates the source of the information ie.

0— No information given on the 1985-86 Claim Form. The figures are estimates given by the authority on 1984-85 Form.

1— Figures from the 1985-86 Form.

2— No information or incorrect information given on the 1985-86 Form. Figures provided subsequently by the local authority.

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	*Rent roll*	*Current tenants arrears*	*Former tenants arrears*	*Total arrears*	*Total arrears as percentage of rent roll*	*Form used*
Isles of Scilly	122	105,416	825	0	825	0·78	1
Greater Manchester							
Bolton	26,298	17,371,460	282,386	122,089	404,475	2·33	1
Bury	11,778	8,032,342	172,582	27,239	199,821	2·49	1
Manchester	99,814	63,614,421	3,201,993	1,372,232	4,574,275	7·19	1
Oldham	25,964	20,706,218	795,800	n.a.	795,800	3·84	1
Rochdale	22,026	16,807,242	397,622	337,518	735,140	4·37	1
Salford	42,995	31,276,124	836,026	647,476	1,483,502	4·74	1
Stockport	16,767	12,534,352	240,300	111,462	351,762	2·81	1
Tameside	21,353	16,302,549	680,250	506,444	1,186,694	7·28	1
Trafford	14,345	10,543,300	300,124	224,700	524,824	4·98	1
Wigan	34,339	25,204,159	254,283	263,010	517,293	2·05	1
Total of Districts	315,679	222,392,167	7,161,366	3,612,220	10,773,586		
Merseyside							
Knowsley	26,697	21,072,013	986,266	530,863	1,517,129	7·20	1
Liverpool	68,959	57,935,100	4,466,000	2,500,000	6,966,000	12·02	2
St. Helens	20,562	13,116,585	724,576	252,596	977,172	7·45	1
Sefton	18,322	14,498,598	469,049	152,610	621,659	4·29	1
Wirral	25,089	22,635,153	1,002,726	531,520	1,534,246	6·78	1
Total of Districts	159,629	129,257,449	7,648,617	3,967,589	11,616,206		
South Yorkshire							
Barnsley	31,763	20,907,106	465,316	187,259	652,575	3·12	1
Doncaster	34,387	23,895,086	393,866	244,242	638,108	2·67	1
Rotherham	34,921	26,037,679	841,494	162,980	1,004,474	3·86	1

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Sheffield	91,344	66,755,846	8,637,084	1,014,217	9,651,301	14·46	1
Total of Districts	192,415	137,595,717	10,337,760	1,608,698	11,946,458		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Tyne and Wear							
Gateshead	36,242	24,862,036	590,925	212,842	803,767	3·23	1
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	47,167	35,141,877	1,586,460	347,051	1,933,511	5·50	1
North Tyneside	29,303	21,815,238	606,132	227,299	833,431	3·82	1
South Tyneside	30,879	23,284,723	586,951	178,366	765,317	3·29	1
Sunderland	46,106	28,409,824	960,905	89,309	1,050,214	3·70	2
Total of Districts	189,697	133,513,698	4,331,373	1,054,867	5,386,240		
West Midlands							
Birmingham	124,616	105,742,237	5,350,602	133,391	5,483,993	5·19	1
Coventry	25,891	20,777,331	1,221,181	16,920	1,238,101	5·96	1
Dudley	37,121	25,652,000	833,000	n/a	833,000	3·25	1
Sandwell	56,232	39,805,048	1,573,113	1,632,531	3,205,644	8·05	1
Solihull	16,758	13,837,384	340,096	138,359	478,455	3·46	1
Walsall	38,929	28,084,234	3,485,047	556,669	4,041,716	14·39	1
Wolverhampton	40,582	34,541,686	1,986,666	800,000	2,786,666	8·07	2
Total of Districts	340,129	268,439,920	14,789,705	3,277,870	18,067,575		
West Yorkshire							
Bradford	37,084	25,344,373	946,759	702,814	1,649,573	6·51	1
Calderdale	15,898	11,133,737	255,812	78,000	333,812	3·00	1
Kirklees	35,749	21,835,848	617,530	313,366	930,896	4·26	1
Leeds	94,298	58,383,656	1,225,923	1,870,849	3,096,772	5·30	1
Wakefield	45,234	30,244,863	803,247	355,030	1,158,277	3·83	1
Total of Districts	228,263	146,942,477	3,849,271	3,320,059	7,169,330		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Greater London Cl	41,500	34,237,294	1,445,838	1,484,978	2,930,816	8·56	1
City of London	2,307	2,356,970	53,990	23,821	77,811	3·30	1
Camden	35,331	27,868,403	2,261,705	855,799	3,117,504	11·19	1
Greenwich	37,159	27,575,680	796,520	1,089,830	1,886,350	6·84	2
Hackney	45,202	33,908,000	8,340,000	888,000	9,228,000	27·21	1
Hammersmith and Fulham	19,530	20,195,495	1,241,827	267,908	1,509,735	7·48	1
Islington	41,260	32,708,937	3,822,493	1,111,265	4,933,758	15·08	1
Kensington and Chelsea	8,825	13,421,299	905,642	191,061	1,096,703	8·17	1
Lambeth	49,156	39,210,188	6,169,743	3,231,896	9,401,639	23·98	2
Lewisham	43,045	32,893,498	5,246,546	2,095,519	7,342,065	22·32	1
Southwark	61,951	53,489,808	8,093,409	2,871,807	10,965,216	20·50	1
Tower Hamlets	17,800	13,935,000	788,136	66,414	854,550	6·13	2
Wandsworth	36,881	44,177,574	3,386,247	2,044,935	5,431,182	12·29	1
Westminster	23,581	25,754,045	1,160,000	601,000	1,761,000	6·84	1

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Barking and Dagenham	33,555	23,259,836	521,823	206,036	727,859	3·13	1
Barnet	18,713	21,516,094	667,355	303,303	970,658	4·51	1
Bexley	11,403	9,865,676	253,795	15,122	268,917	2·73	1
Brent	21,925	15,765,000	4,539,175	743,230	5,282,405	33·51	2
Bromley	17,214	16,511,984	400,000	125,000	525,000	3·18	1
Croydon	20,305	17,638,643	895,722	169,450	1,065,172	6·04	1
Ealing	21,038	20,595,998	1,232,484	262,058	1,494,542	7·26	1
Enfield	21,580	20,245,675	855,896	414,553	1,270,449	6·28	1
Haringey	25,452	19,421,187	2,942,422	N/A	2,942,422	15·15	2
Harrow	8,652	8,401,349	569,023	135,019	704,042	8·38	1

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Havering	16,993	15,078,098	375,586	354,705	730,291	4·84	1
Hillingdon	19,687	19,439,478	354,114	96,190	450,304	2·32	1
Hounslow	20,509	17,054,204	1,312,539	279,496	1,592,035	9·34	1
Kingston-upon-Thames	6,787	7,170,948	64,073	40,784	104,857	1·46	1
Merton	14,025	15,047,340	550,000	50,000	600,000	3·99	0
Newham	32,237	25,474,451	1,596,000	729,000	2,325,000	9·13	1
Redbridge	11,516	13,275,011	531,998	106,370	638,368	4·81	1
Richmond-upon-Thames	10,191	9,744,451	154,470	40,920	195,390	2·01	1
Sutton	12,417	13,438,518	238,200	112,200	350,400	2·61	1
Waltham Forest	21,473	17,199,365	2,567,182	498,667	3,065,849	17·83	1

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Avon							
Bath	7,581	6,523,303	146,822	34,476	181,298	2·78	1
Bristol	42,827	30,575,995	1,120,683	526,677	1,647,360	5·39	1
Kingswood	5,278	3,736,034	21,595	4,834	26,429	0·71	1
Northavon	6,063	4,586,458	48,062	17,216	65,278	1·42	1
Wansdyke	5,546	3,665,406	13,998	2,042	16,040	0·44	1
Woodspring	9,317	7,559,134	213,445	83,429	296,874	3·93	1
Total of Districts	76,612	56,646,330	1,564,605	668,674	2,233,279		
Bedfordshire							
North Bedfordshire	8,475	6,729,653	136,982	61,752	198,734	2·95	1
Luton	12,233	10,493,525	224,533	44,460	268,993	2·56	1
Mid Bedforshire	8,374	5,640,469	88,855	18,477	107,332	1·90	1
South Bedforshire	8,298	6,973,636	65,349	N/A	65,349	0·94	1
Total of Districts	37,380	29,837,283	515,719	124,689	640,408		
Berkshire							
Bracknell	10,730	8,502,543	186,805	45,773	232,578	2·74	1
Newbury	8,056	6,118,027	64,870	26,837	91,707	1·50	1
Reading	10,338	8,807,529	541,424	106,694	648,118	7·36	1
Slough	10,796	8,154,272	303,704	81,374	385,078	4·72	1
Windsor and Maidenhead	7,808	6,963,032	154,135	55,003	209,138	3·00	1
Wokingham	3,659	3,426,882	65,374	12,950	78,324	2·29	1
Total of Districts	51,387	41,972,285	1,316,312	328,631	1,644,943		
Buckinghamshire							
Aylesbury Vale	11,605	9,077,590	111,300	29,200	140,500	1·55	1
Beaconsfield	3,762	2,886,174	29,913	13,798	43,711	1·51	1
Chiltern	5,273	3,861,159	49,567	13,147	62,714	1·62	1
Milton Keynes	7,332	5,859,798	99,973	67,640	167,613	2·86	1
Wycombe	10,592	7,965,519	188,439	38,980	227,419	2·86	1
Total of Districts	38,564	29,650,240	479,192	162,765	641,957		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Cambridgeshire							
Cambridge	10,973	7,696,537	486,203	119,860	606,063	7·87	1
East Cambridgeshire	5,001	3,638,339	50,672	7,716	58,388	1·60	1
Fenland	5,511	3,502,984	54,741	15,958	70,699	2·02	1
Huntingdon	9,082	6,228,039	72,747	35,311	108,058	1·74	1
Peterborough	10,044	7,626,351	98,686	81,758	180,444	2·37	1
South Cambridgeshire	7,937	5,690,344	87,925	15,511	103,436	1·82	1
Total of Districts	48,548	34,382,594	850,974	276,114	1,127,085		
Cheshire							
Chester	8,734	6,109,169	72,779	58,769	131,548	2·15	1
Congleton	5,276	3,420,695	31,339	15,491	46,830	1·37	1
Crewe and Nantwich	8,673	6,225,301	76,542	38,078	114,620	1·84	1
Ellesmere and Neston	9,054	5,166,885	81,210	62,839	144,049	2·79	1

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Halton	9,878	6,786,078	229,162	70,245	299,407	4·41	1
Macclesfield	8,712	5,784,802	74,118	28,278	102,396	1·77	1
Vale Royal	10,145	6,725,446	103,474	32,566	136,040	2·02	1
Warrington	13,317	7,489,898	17,335	32,000	49,335	0·66	1
Total of Districts	73,794	47,708,274	685,959	338,266	1,024,225		
Cleveland							
Hartlepool	11,443	8,820,988	113,944	104,493	218,437	2·48	1
Langbaurgh	17,488	13,930,754	86,102	25,335	111,437	0·80	1
Middlesbrough	18,186	16,675,168	690,318	218,480	908,798	5·45	1
Stockton on Tees	19,055	13,865,218	331,737	185,820	517,557	3·73	1
Total of Districts	66,172	53,292,128	1,222,101	534,128	1,756,229		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Cornwall							
Caradon	4,616	3,622,174	43,017	17,249	60,266	1·66	1
Carrick	5,288	3,809,158	52,846	n.a.	52,346	1·39	1
Kerrier	4,160	3,206,443	43,341	15,337	58,678	1·83	1
North Cornwall	4,571	3,841,488	79,785	23,927	103,712	2·70	1
Penwith	4,023	3,380,485	37,250	17,060	54,310	1·61	1
Restormel	4,520	2,973,247	n.a.	17,239	17,239	0·58	1
Total of Districts	27,178	20,832,995	256,239	90,812	347,051		
Cumbria							
Allerdale	6,605	5,292,243	90,950	25,600	116,550	2·20	1
Barrow in Furness	4,877	4,059,790	80,000	80,000	160,000	3·94	0
Carlisle	12,376	6,539,467	300,254	16,172	316,426	4·84	1
Copeland	6,653	4,589,830	88,000	20,000	108,000	2·35	1
Eden	2,615	1,833,808	30,476	4,764	35,240	1·92	1
South Lakeland	6,076	4,416,132	42,011	5,164	47,175	1·07	1
Total of Districts	39,202	26,731,270	631,691	151,700	783,391		
Derbyshire							
Amber Valley	7,773	5,530,071	104,781	20,000	124,781	2·26	1
Bolsover	8,593	6,360,633	147,500	52,000	199,500	3·14	1
Chesterfield	13,856	9,604,453	110,032	52,050	162,082	1·69	1
Derby	21,230	13,573,172	308,075	24,820	332,895	2·45	1
Erewash	8,696	6,212,655	53,598	15,937	69,535	1·12	1
High Peak	6,301	4,782,352	84,891	40,379	125,270	2·62	1
North East Derbyshire	11,279	8,150,377	219,382	52,709	272,091	3·34	1
South Derbyshire	4,797	3,525,595	72,217	34,900	107,117	3·04	1
West Derbyshire	4,188	3,359,938	39,803	6,541	46,344	1·38	1
Total of Districts	86,713	61,099,246	1,140,279	299,336	1,439,615		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Devon							
East Devon	6,039	3,547,080	76,318	n.a.	76,318	2·15	1
Exeter	8,308	5,236,857	66,191	14,086	80,277	1·53	1
North Devon	4,430	3,557,646	45,000	1,500	46,500	1·31	0
Plymouth	22,693	16,625,520	385,928	62,843	448,771	2·70	1
South Hams	4,121	3,530,045	7,054	3,474	10,528	0·30	1
Teignbridge	5,465	4,305,079	75,485	3,000	78,485	1·82	1
Mid Devon	4,970	3,548,825	61,136	10,169	71,305	2·01	1
Torbay	4,650	3,509,201	55,270	10,305	65,575	1·87	1
Torridge	2,594	1,872,455	43,054	15,682	58,736	3·14	1
West Devon	1,950	1,766,652	20,404	7,670	28,074	1·59	1
Total of Districts	65,220	47,499,360	835,840	128,729	964,569		
Dorset							

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Bournemouth	6,740	5,943,641	172,448	19,674	192,122	3·23	1
Christchurch	1,305	1,408,062	18,665	3,297	21,962	1·56	1
North Dorset	3,507	2,440,326	42,839	16,248	59,087	2·42	1
Poole	6,790	5,556,414	48,682	13,348	62,030	1·12	1
Purbeck	2,280	1,778,799	17,260	3,343	20,603	1·16	1
West Dorset	6,218	4,722,275	60,771	15,030	75,801	1·61	1
Weymouth & Portland	4,151	3,465,421	46,068	16,507	62,575	1·81	1
Wimborne	2,530	2,292,955	17,957	5,223	23,180	1·01	1
Total of Districts	34,021	27,607,893	424,690	92,670	517,360		
Durham							
Chester le Street	7,571	6,057,299	39,169	12,639	51,808	0·86	1
Darlington	8,240	5,088,521	74,470	31,030	105,500	2·07	1
Derwentside	12,613	9,060,712	176,655	144,457	321,112	3·54	1
Durham	11,552	7,575,653	24,662	12,840	37,502	0·50	1
Easington	19,274	15,597,921	374,110	10,000	384,110	2·46	1
Sedgefield	15,665	12,766,188	132,897	70,617	203,514	1·59	1
Teesdale	1,329	839,417	6,204	2,901	9,105	1·08	1
Wear Valley	8,270	6,331,526	39,353	28,277	67,630	1·07	1
Total of Districts	84,514	63,317,237	867,520	312,761	1,180,281		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
East Sussex							
Brighton	11,935	11,653,500	180,000	50,000	230,000	1·97	0
Eastbourne	5,173	4,959,938	251,563	27,297	278,860	5·62	1
Hastings	4,977	3,760,425	101,397	34,128	135,525	3·60	1
Hove	4,571	3,414,944	55,873	14,328	70,201	2·06	1
Lewes	4,523	3,864,695	76,182	24,284	100,466	2·60	1
Rother	4,180	2,930,260	41,000	22,000	63,000	2·15	0
Wealden	4,460	4,416,460	229,163	75,000	304,163	6·89	1
Total of Districts	39,819	35,000,222	935,178	247,037	1,182,215		
Essex							
Basildon	5,983	5,180,335	93,176	13,425	106,601	2·06	1
Braintree	12,000	9,488,989	46,623	27,637	74,260	0·78	1
Brentwood	3,789	2,712,000	30,000	n/a	30,000	1·11	0
Castle Point	2,569	2,037,260	32,000	n/a	32,000	1·57	0
Chelmsford	9,997	7,165,301	146,617	57,451	204,068	2·85	1
Colchester	9,348	7,718,659	146,000	25,200	171,200	2·22	1
Epping Forest	9,794	7,933,772	118,398	81,027	199,425	2·51	1
Harlow	18,143	11,722,245	267,600	55,200	322,800	2·75	1
Malden	2,580	2,093,232	16,849	4,242	21,091	1·01	1
Rochford	2,590	2,178,745	11,039	2,704	13,743	0·63	1
Southend on Sea	8,327	8,462,945	107,447	32,666	140,113	1·66	1
Tendring	4,415	3,653,434	24,913	17,018	41,931	1·15	1
Thurrock	15,731	12,804,073	504,000	225,000	729,000	5·69	1
Uttlesford	4,194	3,488,331	88,000	9,000	97,000	2·78	1
Total of Districts	109,460	86,639,321	1,632,662	550,570	2,183,232		
Gloucestershire							
Cheltenham	7,113	5,089,610	71,378	17,949	89,327	1·76	1
Cotswold	5,342	4,330,833	62,811	15,455	78,266	1·81	1
Forest of Dean	5,517	4,386,680	136,070	29,500	165,570	3·77	1
Gloucester	6,646	4,979,048	137,032	34,693	171,725	3·45	1
Stroud	7,676	5,400,228	47,961	30,465	78,426	1·45	1
Tewkesbury	4,282	3,442,969	142,168	n/a	142,168	4·13	1
Total of Districts	36,576	27,629,368	597,420	128,062	725,482		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Hampshire							
Basingstoke & Deane	12,395	10,727,810	139,550	74,020	213,570	1·99	1

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
East Hampshire	5,083	4,869,389	73,532	17,042	90,574	1·86	1
Eastleigh	5,416	4,439,650	93,325	18,775	112,100	2·52	1
Fareham	3,510	3,127,307	15,666	10,457	26,123	0·84	1
Gosport	5,354	4,716,594	22,947	3,256	26,203	0·56	1
Hart	2,792	2,348,582	54,933	14,110	69,043	2·94	1
Havant	4,104	3,903,453	37,852	13,090	50,942	1·31	1
New Forest	7,162	67,319,980	146,602	51,390	197,992	2·94	1
Portsmouth	23,733	21,505,649	508,214	111,327	619,541	2·88	1
Rushmoor	6,491	6,353,696	225,890	86,870	312,760	4·92	1
Southampton	22,059	16,452,286	325,833	56,387	382,220	2·32	1
Test Valley	7,678	7,174,049	52,176	13,893	66,069	0·92	1
Winchester	6,944	5,431,787	127,949	45,189	173,138	3·19	1
Total of Districts	113,221	97,782,232	1,824,469	515,8506	2,340,275		
Hereford & Worcester							
Bromsgrove	4,630	3,195,316	21,639	5,373	27,012	0·85	1
Hereford	5,223	3,392,540	42,183	6,684	48,867	1·44	1
Leominster	2,159	1,646,044	37,608	10,749	48,357	2·94	1
Malvern Hills	5,608	5,112,935	164,315	31,402	195,717	3·83	1
Redditch	3,711	2,814,912	67,848	17,538	85,386	3·03	1
South Herefordshire	2,369	1,832,421	11,300	2,130	13,430	0·73	1
Worcester	6,564	4,339,562	113,211	18,091	131,302	3·03	1
Wychavon	8,299	6,074,146	191,421	31,681	223,102	3·67	1
Wyre Forest	7,971	6,365,000	170,000	40,000	210,000	3·30	0
Total of Districts	46,534	34,772,876	819,525	163,648	983,173		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Hertfordshire							
Broxbourne	5,287	4,996,295	152,567	50,249	202,816	4·06	1
Dacorum	16,833	11,380,310	209,269	50,656	259,9925	2·17	1
East Hertfordshire	8,918	7,205,740	119,973	32,939	152,912	2·12	1
Hertsmere	8,077	6,461,295	235,636	104,378	340,014	5·26	0
North Hertfordshire	12,343	9,541,582	52,885	17,600	70,485	0·74	1
St. Albans	8,145	5,249,656	163,445	32,000	195,445	3·72	1
Stevenage	14,348	11,124,604	194,466	75,396	269,862	2·43	1
Three Rivers	6,304	5,293,846	223,377	59,462	282,839	5·34	1
Watford	6,694	5,167,348	196,173	85,370	231,543	5·45	1
Welwyn Hatfield	15,365	11,257,331	101,563	17,923	119,486	1·06	1
Total of Districts	102,369	78,287,007	1,649,354	525,973	2,175,327		
Humberside							
Beverley	5,526	2,994,569	33,613	950	34,563	1·15	1
Boothferry	4,846	3,610,103	62,064	15,768	77,832	2·16	1
Cleethorpes	3,596	2,707,159	45,474	50,379	95,853	3·54	1
Glanford	3,895	2,926,915	17,598	9,068	26,666	0·91	1
Great Grimsby	8,409	6,715,869	52,817	11,903	64,720	0·96	1
Holderness	2,579	1,792,015	14,304	3,777	18,081	1·01	1
Kingston-upon-Hull	47,068	32,566,048	730,000	85,000	815,000	2·50	1
North Wolds	4,997	3,797,262	35,776	4,125	39,901	1·05	1
Scunthorpe	9,602	8,083,611	208,065	158,648	366,713	4·54	1
Total of Districts	90,518	65,193,551	1,199,711	339,618	1,539,329		
Isle of Wight							
Medina	3,327	3,100,075	51,294	20,182	71,476	2.31	1
South Wight	2,424	2,009,210	89,247	7,208	96,455	4·80	1
Total of Districts	5,751	5,109,285	140,541	27,390	167,931		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Kent							
Ashford	8,896	8,040,422	4,545,000	82,000	536,500	6·67	1

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Canterbury	7,384	5,360,539	106,143	16,863	123,011	2·10	1
Dartford	6,349	5,716,031	66,839	18,638	15,477	1·50	1
Dover	8,237	6,643,764	96,699	12,401	109,100	1·64	1
Gillingham	4,590	3,645,862	68,434	27,140	95,574	2·62	1
Gravesham	8,416	6,849,055	202,079	12,583	214,662	3·13	1
Maidstone	9,067	6,544,229	157,421	51,609	209,030	3·19	1
Medway	11,369	10,702,233	166,939	52,717	219,656	2·05	1
Sevenoaks	7,764	6,399,312	214,091	42,114	256,205	4·00	1
Shepway	4,685	4,449,057	144,960	34,968	179,928	4·04	1
Swale	8,739	7,455,090	171,105	51,180	222,285	2·98	1
Thanet	7,623	6,173,581	196,895	62,886	259,781	4·21	1
Tonbridge and Malling	7,030	5,702,763	136,002	35,863	171,865	3·01	1
Tunbridge Wells	6,644	4,991,497	120,880	36,468	157,348	3·15	1
Total of Districts	107,293	89,178,435	2,302,992	537,430	2,840,422		
Lancashire							
Blackburn	14,162	11,180,828	252,954	184,943	437,897	3·92	1
Blackpool	7,484	5,561,829	107,954	26,006	133,960	2·41	1
Burnley	7,360	5,679,830	254,315	126,081	380,396	6·70	1
Chorley	4,412	3,374,880	49,654	23,320	72,974	2·16	1
Fylde	2,623	1,828,822	51,395	15,381	66,776	3·65	1
Hyndburn	4,577	3,865,666	107,558	105,062	212,620	5·50	1
Lancaster	5,536	3,706,345	121,744	63,217	184,961	4·99	1
Pendle	5,273	4,327,344	139,149	48,390	187,539	4·33	1
Preston	11,628	9,234,371	199,379	72,999	272,378	2·95	1
Ribble Valley	1,902	1,571,218	20,538	4,843	25,381	1·62	1
Rossendale	6,076	4,482,000	115,500	90,000	205,500	4·59	0
South Ribble	4,311	3,546,257	51,232	22,361	73,593	2·08	1
West Lancashire	3,796	2,693,319	48,763	16,255	65,018	2·41	1
Wyre	4,076	2,749,317	78,189	428	78,617	2·86	1
Total of Districts	83,216	63,802,026	1,598,324	799,286	2,397,610		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Leicestershire							
Blaby	3,354	2,098,113	19,688	3,851	23,539	1·12	1
Charnwood	8,487	5,453,857	133,072	47,681	180,753	3·31	1
Harborough	3,384	2,488,308	33,059	11,640	44,699	1·80	1
Hinckley and Bosworth	5,279	3,783,557	95,011	36,668	131,679	3·48	1
Leicester	34,580	29,366,065	359,649	490,896	850,545	2·90	1
Melton	2,828	2,118,911	6,260	13,970	20,230	0·95	1
North West Leicester	6,142	4,842,974	228,096	65,937	294,033	6·07	1
Oadby and Wigston	1,913	1,168,998	26,769	1,978	28,747	2·46	1
Rutland	1,973	1,279,071	39,441	6,399	45,840	3·58	1
Total of Districts	67,940	52,599,854	941,045	679,020	1,620,065		
Lincolnshire							
Boston	5,937	3,491,277	33,717	10,457	44,174	1·27	1
East Lindsey	6,031	3,960,408	34,535	13,606	48,141	1·22	1
Lincoln	10,560	6,542,232	102,574	72,290	174,864	2·67	1
North Kesteven	5,311	3,845,770	34,800	5,950	40,750	1·06	0
South Holland	5,650	4,003,123	87,337	44,503	131,840	3·29	1
South Kesteven	9,362	6,672,374	101,976	19,748	121,724	1·82	1
West Lindsey	5,040	3,949,114	104,009	26,714	130,723	3·31	1
Total of Districts	47,891	32,464,298	498,948	193,268	692,216		
Norfolk							
Breckland	7,818	5,382,874	91,195	37,580	128,775	2·39	1
Broadland	4,045	2,931,349	10,800	2,300	13,100	0·45	1
Great Yarmouth	8,019	5,251,714	42,216	7,420	49,636	0·95	1
North Norfolk	6,331	4,518,690	130,984	23,130	154,114	3·41	1
Norwich	23,406	18,359,559	1,128,402	14,205	1,142,607	6·22	1
South Norfolk	6,090	4,949,241	129,389	31,903	161,292	3·26	1
West Norfolk	9,856	6,412,426	110,942	21,339	132,281	2·06	1
Total of Districts	65,565	47,805,853	1,643,928	137,877	1,781,805		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	*Rent roll*	*Current tenants arrears*	*Former tenants arrears*	*Total arrears*	*Total arrears as percentage of rent roll*	*Form used*
Northamptonshire							
Corby	10,442	7,311,637	172,536	163,844	336,380	4·60	1
Daventry	5,222	3,913,588	n.a.	2,299	2,299	0·06	1
East Northampton	5,450	3,001,714	53,466	12,981	66,447	2·21	1
Kettering	6,179	4,411,699	76,325	13,039	89,364	2·03	1
Northampton	12,207	9,475,021	324,263	143,898	468,161	4·94	1
South Northampton	4,739	2,592,717	10,433	3,885	14,318	0·55	1
Wellingborough	7,141	5,976,183	92,154	43,301	135,455	2·27	1
Total of Districts	51,380	36,682,559	729,177	383,247	1,112,424		
Northumberland							
Alnwick	3,055	2,570,371	11,000	12,000	23,000	0·89	1
Berwick-upon-Tweed	3,829	2,567,449	58,389	15,319	73,708	2·87	1
Blyth Valley	10,130	7,747,450	131,170	34,324	165,494	2·14	1
Castle Morpeth	4,129	3,078,050	45,000	15,000	60,000	1·95	0
Tynedale	4,818	3,346,803	46,291	8,155	54,446	1·63	1
Wansbeck	9,675	6,612,466	240,235	75,760	315,995		
Total of Districts	35,636	25,922,589	532,085	160,558	692,643	4·78	1
North Yorkshire							
Craven	2,368	1,550,931	9,068	2,913	11,981	0·77	1
Hambleton	4,971	3,459,193	35,987	14,210	50,197	1·45	1
Harrogate	6,235	4,623,093	32,618	16,427	49,045	1·12	1
Richmondshire	2,848	2,149,795	29,551	8,581	38,132	1·77	1
Ryedale	3,828	2,365,867	22,511	5,365	27,876	1·18	1
Scarborough	7,535	4,954,206	101,102	22,939	124,041	2·50	1
Selby	5,593	4,146,044	90,852	26,368	117,220	2·83	2
York	10,773	6,387,389	76,574	16,350	92,924	1·45	1
Total of Districts	44,151	29,411,518	398,263	113,153	511,416		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	*Rent roll*	*Current tenants arrears*	*Former tenants arrears*	*Total arrears*	*Total arrears as percentage of rent roll*	*Form used*
Nottinghamshire							
Ashfield	11,163	7,725,186	272,600	90,700	363,300	4·70	1
Bassetlaw	10,231	7,603,124	137,000	30,000	167,000	2·20	1
Broxtowe	6,976	5,807,416	90,777	3,810	94,587	1·63	1
Gedling	5,993	4,337,924	50,693	6,752	57,445	1·32	1
Mansfield	10,649	8,868,882	219,515	120,502	340,017	3·83	1
Newark	8,317	6,095,247	65,664	40,195	105,859	1·74	1
Nottingham	47,447	35,390,200	1,111,000	206,000	1,317,000	3·72	1
Rushcliffe	4,681	3,650,078	78,200	90,000	168,200	4·61	1
Total of Districts	105,457	79,478,057	2,025,449	587,959	2,613,408		
Oxfordshire							
Cherwell	8,600	6,930,450	80,000	20,000	100,000	1·44	0
Oxford	10,263	6,861,667	195,785	50,000	245,785	3·58	1
South Oxfordshire	7,951	6,581,764	147,696	47,222	194,918	2·96	2
Vale of White Horse	6,388	4,850,717	33,386	27,937	61,323	1·26	1
West Oxfordshire	5,764	3,894,877	73,477	5,743	79,220	2·03	1
Total of Districts	38,466	29,119,475	530,344	150,902	681,246		
Salop							
Bridgnorth	3,767	2,295,044	22,605	10,743	33,348	1·45	1
North Shropshire	3,663	2,608,303	21,406	4,984	26,390	1·01	1
Oswestry	2,851	1,639,709	21,235	8,506	29,741	1·81	1
Shrewsbury & Atcham	7,216	4,881,975	84,500	25,625	110,125	2·26	1
South Shropshire	1,954	1,624,379	19,260	4,984	24,244	1·49	1
The Wrekin	11,458	9,721,283	289,772	106,056	395,828	4·07	1
Total of Districts	30,914	22,770,693	458,778	160,898	619,676		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	*Rent roll*	*Current tenants arrears*	*Former tenants arrears*	*Total arrears*	*Total arrears as percentage of rent roll*	*Form used*
Somerset							
Mendip	6,755	4,775,312	131,077	17,286	148,363	3·11	1
Sedgemoor	6,845	4,786,217	64,835	22,202	87,037	1·82	1
Taunton Deane	8,704	6,544,702	191,799	46,875	238,674	3·65	1
West Somerset	2,150	1,795,786	2,000	3,900	5,900	0·33	1
Yeovil	12,167	6,843,891	80,055	23,389	103,444	1·51	1
Total of Districts	36,621	24,745,908	469,766	113,652	583,418		
Staffordshire							
Cannock Chase	8,988	6,452,604	188,811	28,716	217,527	3·57	1
East Staffordshire	7,208	4,225,247	18,500	28,646	47,146	1·12	1
Lichfield	6,673	4,370,168	102,400	37,480	139,880	3·20	1
Newcastle under Lyme	12,398	7,562,136	109,519	28,865	138,384	1·83	1
South Staffordshire	6,681	4,802,531	52,991	13,702	56,693	1·39	1
Stafford	8,539	5,238,472	175,430	21,589	197,019	3·76	1
Staffs. Moorlands	4,285	2,210,475	50,000	3,500	53,500	2·42	0
Stoke-on-Trent	29,401	17,582,931	139,574	16,285	155,859	0·89	1
Tamworth	7,999	7,296,238	133,493	73,101	206,594	2·83	1
Total of Districts	92,170	59,740,802	970,718	251,884	1,222,602		
Suffolk							
Babergh	5,339	4,107,540	30,600	6,100	36,700	0·89	1
Forest Heath	4,794	3,708,752	120,722	28,457	149,179	4·02	1
Ipswich	12,131	8,358,206	597,928	106,243	704,171	8·42	1
Mid Suffolk	4,913	3,843,432	147,116	31,430	178,546	4·65	1
St. Edmundsbury	9,264	6,405,247	129,784	26,014	155,798	2·43	1
Suffolk Coastal	6,122	4,272,359	59,604	29,628	89,232	2·09	1
Waveney	6,498	5,321,088	139,500	20,800	160,300	3·01	1
Total of Districts	49,061	26,016,624	1,225,254	248,672	1,473,926		

Rent Arrears 1984-85

	Dwellings	*Rent roll*	*Current tenants arrears*	*Former tenants arrears*	*Total arrears*	*Total arrears as percentage of rent roll*	*Form used*
Surrey							
Elmbridge	6,082	5,854,120	98,380	9,060	107,440	1·84	1
Epsom and Ewell	2,496	2,510,013	41,328	6,621	47,949	1·91	1
Guildford	7,644	6,848,644	286,440	40,900	327,340	4·78	1
Mole Valley	4,894	3,805,046	158,043	36,731	194,774	5·12	2
Reigate and Banstead	7,483	5,105,739	76,097	51,898	127,995	2·51	1
Runnymede	4,469	3,849,962	156,275	6,804	163,079	4·24	1
Spelthorne	4,633	4,769,000	120,000	20,000	140,000	2·94	0
Surrey Heath	3,837	3,049,564	122,333	30,000	152,333	5·00	1
Tandridge	4,406	3,863,149	98,470	17,169	115,639	2·99	1
Waverley	6,997	5,498,557	176,323	34,611	210,934	3·84	1
Woking	4,951	4,720,000	50,000	20,000	70,000	1·48	0
Total of Districts	57,892	4,987,3,794	1,383,689	27,394	1,657,483		
Warwickshire							
North Warwickshire	4,851	2,950,170	65,000	200	65,200	2·21	0
Nuneaton	9,559	7,932,051	169,281	91,315	260,596	3·29	1
Rugby	5,680	4,663,863	88,006	19,907	107,903	2·31	2
Stratford-on-Avon	7,604	6,111,400	88,018	0	88,018	1·44	1
Warwick	8,116	6,368,377	108,464	31,205	139,669	2·19	1
Total of Districts	35,810	28,025,861	518,769	142,627	661,386		
West Sussex							
Adur	4,047	3,145,363	26,108	10,129	36,237	1·15	1
Arun	5,532	5,182,448	119,582	0	119,582	2·31	1
Chichester	7,373	6,399,557	53,817	33,318	87,135	1·36	1
Crawley	13,040	10,545,472	123,687	22,421	146,108	1·39	1
Horsham	6,360	5,293,000	50,000	25,000	750,000	1·42	0
Mid Sussex	5,081	3,756,547	27,981	5,600	33,581	0·89	1

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Worthing	3,114	2,383,346	10,884	6,331	17,215	0·72	1
Total of Districts	44,547	36,705,733	412,059	102,799	514,858		
Wiltshire							
Kennet	5,947	4,253,448	36,449	7,769	44,213	1·04	1
North Wiltshire	7,823	5,602,436	90,475	64,466	154,941	2·77	1
Salisbury	8,541	6,347,814	120,000	5,000	125,000	1·97	1
Thamesdown	14,496	11,632,054	328,388	139,150	467,538	4·02	1
West Wiltshire	7,229	5,332,663	168,256	26,404	194,662	3·65	1
Total of Districts	44,036	33,168,415	743,570	242,789	986,359		

Rent Arrears 1984-85—Totals by Class

	Dwellings	Rent roll	Current tenants arrears	Former tenants arrears	Total arrears	Total arrears as percentage of rent roll	Form used
Isles of Scilly	122	105,416	825	0	825	0·78	
Metropolitan Districts	1,425,812	1,038,141,428	48,118,092	16,841,303	64,959,395	6·26	
Greater London Council	41,500	34,237,294	1,445,838	1,484,978	2,930,816	8·56	
City of London	2,307	2,356,970	53,990	23,821	77,811	3·30	
Inner London Boroughs	419,721	365,137,927	42,212,268	15,315,434	57,527,702	15·75	
Inner London & City	422,028	367,494,897	42,266,258	15,339,255	57,605,513	15·67	
Outer London Boroughs	365,672	326,143,306	20,621,857	4,682,103	25,303,960	7·76	
Total all London	829,200	727,875,497	64,333,953	21,506,336	85,821,136	11·79	
Districts England	2,311,599	1,748,503,491	36,973,139	11,287,194	48,260,323	2·76	
Total all authorities	4,566,733	3,514,625,832	149,426,009	49,634,833	199,060,832	5·66	

Local authority rent arrears (England): 1 April 1983—April 1985

The tables below give details of local authorities' gross rent arrears at 1 April 1983, 1 April 1984 and 1 April 1985. The ratio of gross rent arrears to the total rent collectable for each year (expressed as a percentage) is also given. The right hand-column on each table gives the number of local authority dwellings at 1 April 1985.

The figures have been taken from the Department of the Environment's Housing Subsidy Claim Forms for the respective years. Where no figures were provided by the local authorities, the tables have been marked 'N/A".

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Isles of Scilly	1,053	1·21	1,248	1·34	825	0·78	122
Greater Manchester							
Bolton	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	404,475	2·33	26,298
Bury	260,714	3·13	198,202	2·47	199,821	2·49	11,778
Manchester	3,894,113	6·48	4,070,901	6·69	4,574,275	7·19	99,814
Oldham	670,916	3·55	779,000	3·92	795,300	3·84	25,964
Rochdale	1,025,004	7·16	907,703	5·94	735,140	4·37	22,026
Salford	1,328,388	4·69	1,377,045	4·76	1,483,502	4·74	42,995
Stockport	453,220	3·51	333,625	3·00	351,762	2·81	16,767
Tameside	1,038,121	6·40	1,195,290	7·49	1,186,694	7·28	21,353
Trafford	364,473	3·54	486,179	4·78	524,824	4·98	14,345
Wigan	726,483	2·87	479,729	1·94	517,293	2·05	34,339
Total of districts	9,761,432		9,877,674		10,773,586		315,679
Merseyside							
Knowsley	1,732,801	6·38	1,720,000	7·90	1,517,129	7·20	26,697
Liverpool	6,405,268	9·65	7,042,999	11·82	6,966,000	12·02	68,959

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
St. Helens	n.a.	n.a.	705,249	5·43	977,172	7·45	20,562
Sefton	625,032	4·56	579,200	4·35	621,659	4·29	18,322
Wirral	1,410,624	6·70	2,016,991	9·59	1,534,246	6·78	25,089
Total of districts	10,173,725		12,064,439		11,616,206		159,629
South Yorkshire							
Barnsley	476,228	2·31	635,780	3·07	652,575	3·12	31,763
Doncaster	950,224	4·49	833,615	3·79	638,108	2·67	34,387
Rotherham	835,083	3·01	891,998	3·39	1,004,474	3·86	34,921
Sheffield	1,939,014	3·83	3,634,210	6·93	9,651,301	14·46	91,344
Total of districts	4,200,549		5,995,603		11,946,458		192,415

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Tyne and Wear							
Gateshead	354,534	1·37	773,811	3·07	803,767	3·23	36,242
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,563,779	4·83	1,815,580	5·53	1,933,511	5·50	47,167
North Tyneside	603,938	2·91	572,521	2·66	833,431	3·82	29,303
South Tyneside	1,115,373	5·65	911,488	4·51	765,317	3·29	30,879
Sunderland	1,673,521	5·49	2,230,554	7·65	1,050,214	3·70	46,106
Total of Districts	5,311,145		6,303,954		5,386,240		189,697
West Midlands							
Birmingham	7,290,312	7·45	6,420,000	6·13	5,483,993	5·19	124,616
Coventry	988,622	5·22	980,623	4·85	1,238,101	5·96	25,891
Dudley	590,000	2·54	859,000	3·45	833,000	3·25	37,121
Sandwell	3,125,611	7·58	3,111,668	7·71	3,205,644	8·05	56,232
Solihull	954,605	7·94	442,740	3·37	478,455	3·46	16,758
Walsall	3,301,530	12·07	3,716,397	13·90	4,041,716	14·39	38,929
Wolverhampton	1,789,999	5·69	2,872,666	8·65	2,786,666	8·07	40,582
Total of Districts	18,040,679		18,403,094		18,067,575		340,129
West Yorkshire							
Bradford	1,692,046	6·44	2,142,637	8·26	1,649,573	6·51	37,084
Calderdale	257,540	2·51	265,073	2·47	333,812	3·00	15,898
Kirklees	956,210	4·92	899,884	4·79	930,896	4·26	35,749
Leeds	2,559,256	4·55	3,237,227	5·67	3,096,772	5·30	94,298
Wakefield	742,559	2·63	755,051	2·65	1,158,277	3·83	45,234
Total of Districts	6,207,611		7,299,872		7,169,330		228,263

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Greater London Council	6,667,381	18·78	3,242,359	9·66	2,930,816	8·56	41,500
City of London	46,250	2·44	58,218	2·55	77,811	3·30	2,307
Camden	2,496,585	9·59	2,663,260	9·93	3,117,504	11·19	35,331
Greenwich	1,967,945	7·20	1,606,000	5·90	1,886,350	6·84	37,159
Hackney	3,276,330	10·22	3,638,931	10·92	9,228,000	27·21	45,202
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,134,719	6·90	1,126,053	6·05	1,509,735	7·48	19,530
Islington	5,455,410	17·42	4,529,287	14·54	4,933,758	15·08	41,260
Kensington and Chelsea	850,437	7·66	930,701	7·27	1,096,703	8·17	8,825
Lambeth	n.a.	n.a.	7,863,000	20·80	9,401,639	23·98	49,156
Lewisham	4,284,611	12·88	6,748,272	20·30	7,342,065	22·32	43,045
Southwark	6,797,593	13·49	8,782,029	17·16	10,965,216	20·50	61,951
Tower Hamlets	959,382	7·36	821,109	6·02	854,550	6·13	17,800
Wandsworth	5,692,580	15·06	5,431,185	14·15	5,431,182	12·29	36,881
Westminster	1,623,000	7·56	1,526,000	6·76	1,761,000	6·84	23,581

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Barking & Dagenham	1,082,541	4·82	1,163,722	5·19	727,859	3·13	33,555
Barnet	891,725	4·31	964,740	4·59	970,658	4·51	18,713
Bexley	432,110	4·27	280,099	2·78	268,917	2·73	11,403
Brent	3,609,100	23·16	4,858,726	31·38	5,282,405	33·51	21,925
Bromley	440,370	2·74	861·983	5·23	525,000	3·18	17,214
Croydon	862,156	5·31	637,615	4·05	1,065,172	6·04	20,305
Ealing	1,067,149	5·50	1,355,036	6·75	1,494,542	7·26	21,038
Enfield	597,800	3·15	705,583	3·53	1,270,449	6·28	21,580
Haringey	3,456,423	18·51	2,509,859	13·19	2,942,422	15·15	25,452
Harrow	447,732	5·08	617,803	6·60	704.042	8·38	8,652
Havering	433,717	3·07	739,554	5·08	730,291	4·84	16,993
Hillingdon	577,573	3·25	540,019	2·74	450,304	2·32	19,687
Hounslow	1,225,058	8·24	1,375,653	8·61	1,592,035	9·34	20,509
Kingston-upon-Thames	196,094	2·76	127,432	1·78	104,857	1·46	6,787
Merton	1,290,182	10·42	1,243,379	8·84	600,000	3·99	14,025
Newham	1,607,000	6·70	1,779,000	7·31	2,325,000	9·13	32,237
Redbridge	581,685	4·70	624,294	4·67	638,368	4·81	11,516
Richmond-upon-Thames	95,691	1·03	125,748	1·33	195·390	2·01	10,191
Sutton	365,925	3·14	371,800	3·04	350,400	2·61	12,417
Waltham Forest	1,228,320	8·13	2,751,700	16·52	3,065,849	17·83	21,473

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Avon							
Bath	134,473	2·06	119,765	1·84	181,298	2·78	7,581
Bristol	1,373,391	4·34	1,508,804	4·88	1,647,360	5·39	42,827
Kingswood	40,327	1·03	36,576	1·01	26,429	0·71	5,278
Northavon	68,617	1·45	63,443	1·41	65,278	1·42	6,063
Wansdyke	14,321	0·40	8,548	0·24	16,040	0·44	5,546
Woodspring	259,062	3·75	326,088	4·72	296,874	3·93	9,317
Total of Districts	1,890,191		2,063,224		2,233,279		76,612
Bedfordshire							
North Bedfordshire	139,492	2·39	158,143	2·57	198,754	2·95	8,475
Luton	302,891	3·21	263,074	2·58	268,993	2·56	12,233
Mid Bedfordshire	121,454	2·09	95,490	1·70	107,332	1·90	8,374
South Bedfordshire	94,393	1·57	103,736	1·49	65,349	0·94	8,298
Total of Districts	658,230		620,443		640,408		37,380
Berkshire							
Bracknell	244,393	2·97	248,177	2·98	232,578	2·74	10,730
Newbury	141,000	2·31	117,500	1·99	91,707	1·50	8,056
Reading	575,138	6·54	557,958	6·03	648,118	7·36	10,338
Slough	370,204	4·44	519,758	6·35	385,078	4·72	10,796
Windsor and Maidenhead	160,321	2·64	158,780	2·48	209,138	3·00	7,808
Wokingham	39,692	1·29	48,163	1·49	78,324	2·29	3,659
Total of Districts	1,530,748		1,650,336		1,644,943		51,387
Buckinghamshire							
Aylesbury Vale	189,440	2·28	151,346	1·74	140,500	1·55	11,605
Beaconsfield	30,786	1·01	32,240	1·11	43,711	1·51	3,762
Chiltern	48,423	1·33	66,702	1·70	62,714	1·62	5,273
Milton Keynes	146,332	2·73	133,443	2·32	167,613	2·86	7,332
Wycombe	201,066	2·52	251,258	3·16	227,419	2·86	10,592
Total of Districts	616,052		634,989		641,957		38,564

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Cambridgeshire							
Cambridge	445,377	6·17	n.a.	n.a.	606,063	7·87	10,973
East Cambridgeshire	58,354	1·62	33,814	0·94	58,388	1·60	5,001
Fenland	54,380	1·65	57,956	1·79	70,699	2·02	5,511

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Huntingdon	87,758	1·48	100,062	1·61	108,058	1·74	9,082
Peterborough	153,300	2·08	143,399	1·92	180,444	2·37	10,044
South Cambridgeshire	101,820	1·88	112,600	2·10	103,436	1·82	7,937
Total of Districts	900,989		447,831		1,127,088		48,548
Cheshire							
Chester	176,165	3·25	122,824	2·09	131,548	2·15	8,734
Congleton	30,960	0·90	43,779	1·28	46,830	1·37	5,276
Crewe and Nantwich	114,007	1·92	173,615	2·93	114,620	1·84	8,678
Ellesmere and Neston	118,806	2·17	96,136	1·83	144,049	2·79	9,054
Halton	287,716	4·25	269,550	4·10	299,407	4·41	9,878
Macclesfield	70,667	1·32	83,404	1·49	102,396	1·77	8,712
Vale Royal	112,000	1·74	154,610	2·39	136,040	2·02	10,145
Warrington	52,238	0·75	59,759	0·82	49,335	0·66	13,317
Total of Districts	962,559		1,003,677		1,024,225		73,794
Cleveland							
Hartlepool	163,478	1·99	186,924	2·20	218,437	2·48	11,443
Langbaurgh	144,540	1·25	108,758	0·89	111,437	0·80	17,488
Middlesbrough	900,489	6·25	835,832	5·85	908,798	5·45	18,186
Stockton on Tees	571,567	3·96	526,852	3·79	517,557	3·73	19,055
Total of Districts	1,780,074		1,658,366		1,756,229		66,172

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Cornwall							
Caradon	61,647	1·84	42,439	1·23	60,866	1·66	4,616
Carrick	71,372	2·01	43,096	1·18	52,846	1·39	5,288
Kerrier	81,455	2·54	64,966	2·05	58,678	1·83	4,160
North Cornwall	106,185	3·00	73,040	2·05	103,712	2·70	4,571
Penwith	52,475	1·68	56,575	1·74	54,310	1·61	4,023
Restormel	86,909	2·88	81,962	2·79	17,239	0·58	4,520
Total of Districts	460,043		362,078		347,051		27,178
Cumbria							
Allerdale	80,000	1·62	84,000	1·61	116,550	2·20	6,605
Barrow in Furness	147,685	3·74	143,989	3·51	160,000	3·94	4,877
Carlisle	249,000	3·99	122,551	2·00	316,426	4·84	12,376
Copeland	204,522	4·36	121,362	2·67	108,000	2·35	6,653
Eden	54,076	3·43	32,300	2·01	35,240	1·92	2,615
South Lakeland	47,361	1·24	40,158	1·10	47,175	1·07	6,076
Total of Districts	732,644		544,360		783,391		39,202
Derbyshire							
Amber Valley	135,440	2·39	116,482	2·09	124,781	2·26	7,773
Bolsover	161,683	2·28	221,326	3·40	199,500	3·14	8,593
Chesterfield	118,231	1·33	179,025	2·13	162,082	1·69	13,856
Derby	353,600	2·66	312,969	2·58	332,895	2·45	21,230
Erewash	72,016	1·22	66,732	1·17	69,535	1·12	8,696
High Peak	84,851	2·33	126,133	2·79	125,270	2·62	6,301
North East Derbyshire	277,783	3·31	199,629	2·45	272,091	3·34	11,279
South Derbyshire	57,736	1·44	148,838	4·08	107,117	3·04	4,797
West Derbyshire	42,653	1·23	31,363	0·98	46,344	1·38	4,188
Total of Districts	1,303,993		1,401,997		1,439,615		86,713

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Devon							
East Devon	73,415	1·95	65,935	1·80	76,318	2·15	6,039
Exeter	51,043	0·94	90,135	1·69	80,277	1·53	8,308
North Devon	64,219	1·68	46,522	1·26	46,500	1·31	4,430

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Plymouth	297,176	1·69	440,974	2·57	448,771	2·70	22,693
South Hams	28,838	0·87	13,235	0·38	10,528	0·30	4,121
Teignbridge	75,400	1·88	69,000	1·65	78,485	1·82	5,465
Mid Devon	44,262	1·29	63,271	1·90	71,305	2·01	4,970
Torbay	61,266	1·78	64,043	1·90	65,575	1·87	4,650
Torridge	58,226	3·04	56,593	2·99	58,736	3·14	2,594
West Devon	38,959	2·22	37,069	2·12	28,074	1·59	1,950
Total of Districts	792,304		946,777		964,569		65,220
Dorset							
Bournemouth	183,978	3·36	179,163	3·12	192,122	3·23	6,740
Christchurch	18,473	1·45	15,904	1·21	21,962	1·56	1,805
North Dorset	87,737	3·60	119,045	4·95	59,087	2·42	3,507
Poole	59,505	1·06	96,623	1·73	62,030	1·12	6,790
Purbeck	51,067	3·27	22,600	1·32	20,603	1·16	2,280
West Dorset	43,694	0·97	49,680	1·09	75,801	1·61	6,218
Weymouth & Portland	61,560	1·88	99,882	2·93	62,575	1·81	4,151
Wimborne	24,180	1·17	20,486	0·94	23,180	1·01	2,530
Total of Districts	530,194		603,383		517,360		34,021
Durham							
Chester le Street	76,116	1·23	63,860	1·04	51,808	0·86	7,571
Darlington	169,367	3·42	118,255	2·48	105,500	2·07	8,240
Derwentside	288,195	3·22	313,297	3·65	321,112	3·54	12,613
Durham	28,973	0·38	29,848	0·41	37,502	0·50	11,552
Easington	306,323	2·01	246,715	1·63	384,110	2·46	19,274
Sedgefield	300,629	2·43	209,422	1·70	203,514	1·59	15,665
Teesdale	7,345	0·84	6,887	0·82	9,105	1·08	1,329
Wear Valley	81,253	1·36	56,792	0·95	67,630	1·07	8,270
Total of Districts	1,258,201		1,045,076		1,180,281		84,514

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
East Sussex							
Brighton	234,320	1·99	226,749	1·95	230,000	1·97	11,935
Eastbourne	175,669	4·03	216,235	4·63	278,860	5·62	5,173
Hastings	204,296	5·58	151,329	3·95	135,525	3·60	4,977
Hove	30,730	0·94	47,845	1·47	70,201	2·06	4,571
Lewes	118,247	3·16	79,035	2·17	100,466	2.60	4,523
Rother	56,196	1·93	61,750	2·16	63,000	2·15	4,180
Wealden	152,108	3·60	225,695	5·10	304,163	6·89	4,460
Total of Districts	971,566		1,008,638		1,182,215		39,819
Essex							
Basildon	197,000	4·26	149,600	3·04	106,601	2·06	5,983
Braintree	135,702	1·59	109,639	1·30	74,260	0·78	12,000
Brentwood	62,000	2·21	28,806	1·04	30,000	1·11	3,789
Castle Point	69,468	3·13	32,315	1·57	32,000	1·57	2,569
Chelmsford	122,721	1·89	190,334	2·76	204,068	2·85	9,997
Colchester	123,489	1·81	173,000	2·32	171,200	2·22	9,348
Epping Forest	178,237	2·18	213,182	2·57	199,425	2·51	9,794
Harlow	258,500	2·17	320,200	2·61	322,800	2·75	18,143
Maldon	30,453	1·33	27,500	1·25	21,091	1·01	2,580
Rochford	10,965	0·52	16,326	0·78	13,743	0·63	2,590
Southend on Sea	102,794	1·32	78,957	0·92	140,113	1·66	8,327
Tendring	43,762	1·31	36,093	1·02	41,931	1·15	4,415
Thurrock	859,775	6·08	745,532	5·78	729,000	5·69	15,731
Uttlesford	74,000	2·26	91,583	2·72	97,000	2·78	4,194
Total of Districts	2,268,873		2,213,067		2,183,232		105,671
Gloucestershire							
Cheltenham	111,640	2·10	112,482	2·20	89,327	1·76	7,113
Cotswold	89,348	2·01	86,227	2·02	78,266	1·81	5,342
Forest of Dean	132,143	3·15	158,960	3·74	165,570	3·77	5,517
Gloucester	92,608	1·99	138,206	2·86	171,725	3·45	6,646
Stroud	112,111	2·05	101,669	1·91	78,426	1·45	7,676

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Tewkesbury	128,805	3·87	132,200	3·96	142,168	4·13	4,282
Total of Districts	666,655		729,744		725,482		36,576

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Hampshire							
Basingstoke and Deane	256,259	2·42	225,633	2·09	213,570	1·99	12,395
East Hampshire	112,028	2·48	106,725	2·21	90,574	1·86	5,083
Eastleigh	91,208	2·19	144,538	3·42	112,100	2·52	5,416
Fareham	30.928	1·02	31,160	1·02	26,123	0·84	3,510
Gosport	48,494	1·12	47,167	1·02	26,203	0·56	5,854
Hart	68,968	2·97	60,231	2·69	69,043	2·94	2,792
Havant	53,579	1·34	44,370	1·17	50,942	1·31	4,104
New Forest	210,942	3·41	194,904	3·01	197,992	2·94	7,162
Portsmouth	588,112	2·66	504,085	2·37	619,541	2·88	23,733
Rushmoor	370,748	6·32	287,562	4·54	312,760	4·92	6,491
Southampton	360,821	2·34	342,572	2·19	382,220	2·32	22,059
Test Valley	76,831	1·13	60,722	0·89	66,069	0·92	7,678
Winchester	132,189	2·57	161,964	2·97	173,138	3·19	6,944
Total of Districts	2,401,102		2,212,133		2,340,275		113,221
Hereford and Worcester							
Bromsgrove	59,349	1·60	24,960	0·72	27,012	0·85	4,630
Hereford	39,866	1·28	59,757	1·86	48,867	1·44	5,223
Leominster	43,555	2·72	42,484	2·76	48,357	2·94	2,159
Malvern Hills	159,068	3·71	166,622	3·59	195,717	3·83	5,608
Redditch	85,230	2·85	74,660	2·69	85,386	3·03	3,711
South Herefordshire	18,500	0·94	15,163	0·84	13,430	0·73	2,369
Worcester	104,469	2·41	124,650	2·92	131,302	3·03	6,564
Wychavon	141,527	2·08	195,813	3·10	223,102	3·67	8,299
Wyre Forest	256,403	3·90	205,960	3·20	210,000	3·30	7,971
Total of Districts	907,967		910,074		983,173		46,534

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Hertfordshire							
Broxbourne	156,739	3·32	158,600	3·22	202,816	4·06	5,287
Dacorum	296,088	2·49	412,844	3·36	259,925	2·17	16,888
East Hertfordshire	136,713	1·92	142,320	2·03	152,912	2·12	8,918
Hertsmere	400,924	6·40	340,014	5·44	340,014	5·26	8,077
North Hertfordshire	142,248	1·54	114,710	1·19	70,485	0·74	12,343
St. Albans	189,510	3·49	162,932	3·07	195,445	3·72	8,145
Stevenage	213,229	1·96	313,165	2·79	269,862	2·43	14,348
Three Rivers	83,670	1·52	71,698	1·37	282,839	5·34	6,304
Watford	233,088	4·23	365,859	6·99	281,543	5·45	6,694
Welwyn Hatfield	133,000	1·24	91,273	0·82	119,486	1·06	15,365
Total of districts	1,985,209		2,173,415		2,175,327		102,369
Humberside							
Beverley	29,810	0·94	35,442	1·14	34,563	1·15	5,526
Boothferry	78,962	2·32	84,579	2·58	77,832	2·16	4,846
Cleethorpes	130,355	5·45	126,352	5·38	95,853	3·54	3,596
Glanford	25,752	0·96	25,148	0·88	26,666	0·91	3,895
Great Grimsby	90,259	1·44	67,397	1·03	64,720	0·96	8,409
Holderness	38,779	2·28	25,075	1·46	18,081	1·01	2,579
Kingston-upon-Hull	791,139	2·49	723,000	2·30	8,150,000	2·50	47,063
North Wolds	31,970	0·88	33,740	0·96	39,901	1·05	4,997
Scunthorpe	407,020	5·36	359,505	4·58	366,713	4·54	9,602
Total of districts	1,624,046		1,480,238		1,539,329		90,518
Isle of Wight							

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Medina	78,367	3·50	82,029	2·93	71,476	2·31	3,327
South Wight	31,173	1·83	64,233	3·48	96,455	4·80	2,424
Total of districts	109,540		146,262		167,931		5,751

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Kent							
Ashford	170,000	2·30	658,817	8·38	536,500	6·67	8,896
Canterbury	147,352	2·52	108,220	1·94	123,011	2·10	7,384
Dartford	107,225	1·85	109,297	1·99	85,477	1·50	6,849
Dover	114,620	1·62	113,392	1·70	109,700	1·64	8,237
Gillingham	79,684	2·40	90,025	2·76	95,574	2·62	4,590
Gravesham	235,349	3·40	236,296	3·56	214,662	3·13	8,416
Maidstone	143,379	2·21	176,386	2·85	209,030	3·19	9,067
Medway	232,186	2·28	219,036	2·16	219,656	2·05	11,369
Sevenoaks	312,104	5·10	209,954	3·33	256,205	4·00	7,764
Shepway	65,875	1·69	166,950	3·84	179,928	4·04	4,685
Swale	324,829	4·60	246,670	3·40	222,285	2·98	8,739
Thanet	300,330	4·69	342,282	5·44	259,781	4·21	7,623
Tonbridge and Malling	212,026	3·93	213,445	3·81	171,865	3·01	7,030
Tunbridge Wells	121,889	2·30	155,870	3·00	157,348	3·13	6,644
Total of Districts	2,566,848		3,046,640		2,840,422		107,293
Lancashire							
Blackburn	603,022	5·84	429,729	3·84	437,897	3·92	14,162
Blackpool	181,487	3·19	231,683	4·03	133,960	2·41	7,484
Burnley	487,050	8·60	401,719	6·88	380,396	6·70	7,360
Chorley	123,884	3·83	90,326	2·74	72,974	2·16	4,412
Fylde	31,726	1·88	40,507	2·30	66,776	3·65	2,623
Hyndburn	174,400	4·76	155,737	4·22	212,620	5·50	4,577
Lancaster	187,980	5·56	203,072	5·80	184,961	4·99	5,536
Pendle	138,024	3·43	185,729	4·54	187,539	4·33	5,273
Preston	424,951	5·48	326,365	3·93	272,378	2·95	11,628
Ribble Valley	26,768	1·79	21,610	1·40	25,381	1·62	1,902
Rossendale	191,955	4·48	208,435	4·67	205,500	4·59	6,076
South Ribble	72,136	2·21	67,026	1·98	73,593	2·08	4,311
West Lancashire	61,966	2·35	40,604	1·59	65,018	2·41	3,796
Wyre	81,948	3·19	76,442	2·95	78,617	2·86	4,076
Total of Districts	2,787,297		2,478,983		2,397,610		83,216

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Leicestershire							
Blaby	21,735	1·01	23,200	1·08	23,539	1·12	3,354
Charnwood	87,860	1·63	70,240	1·30	180,753	3·31	8,487
Harborough	45,326	1·86	43,475	1·83	44,699	1·80	3,384
Hinckley and Bosworth	66,178	1·78	67,631	1·86	131,679	3·48	5,279
Leicester	855,580	3·01	1,076,770	3·83	850,545	2·90	34,580
Melton	27,989	1·28	30,940	1·49	20,230	0·95	2,828
North West Leicester	270,148	5·71	273,885	5·79	294,033	6·07	6,142
Oadby and Wigston	35,911	3·06	39,127	3·42	28,747	2·46	1,913
Rutland	54,473	4·12	47,463	3·73	45,840	3·58	1,973
Total of Districts	1,465,200		1,672,731		1,620,065		67,940
Lincolnshire							
Boston	36,161	1·16	39,185	1·20	44,174	1·27	5,937
East Lindsey	58,279	1·62	64,398	1·68	48,141	1·22	6,031
Lincoln	207,898	3·10	187,255	2·84	174,864	2·67	10,560
North Kesteven	39,451	1·08	39,772	1·06	40,750	1·06	5,311
South Holland	109,659	2·56	125,326	3·03	131,840	3·29	5,650
South Kesteven	54,349	0·92	278,485	4·31	121,724	1·82	9,362
West Lindsey	132,679	3·59	111,168	2·93	130,723	3·31	5,040

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Total of Districts	638,476		840,589		692,216		47,891
Norfolk							
Breckland	173,863	3·21	136,826	2·59	128,775	2·39	7,818
Broadland	20,466	0·80	12,000	0·45	13,100	0·45	4,045
Great Yarmouth	46,440	0·91	54,293	1·08	49,636	0·95	8,019
North Norfolk	112,982	2·43	135,368	2·90	154,114	3·41	6,331
Norwich	808,760	4·28	716,632	3·98	1,142,607	6·22	23,406
South Norfolk	150,259	3·12	168,400	3·46	161,292	3·26	6,090
West Norfolk	177,315	2·84	136,315	2·16	132,281	2·06	9,856
Total of Districts	1,490,085		1,359,834		1,781,805		65,565

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Northamptonshire							
Corby	317,834	4·05	296,505	4·05	336,380	4·60	10,442
Daventry	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,299	0·06	5,222
East Northampton	60,847	2·21	76,632	2·66	66,447	2·21	5,450
Kettering	88,230	2·12	85,654	2·09	89,364	2·03	6,179
Northampton	205,700	2·38	352,333	3·77	468,161	4·94	12,207
South Northampton	13,919	0·49	12,129	0·45	14,318	0·55	4,739
Wellingborough	117,902	2·22	126,192	2·23	135,455	2·27	7,141
Total of Districts	804,432		949,446		1,112,424		51,380
Northumberland							
Alnwick	17,693	0·75	22,000	0·93	23,000	0·89	3,055
Berwick-upon-Tweed	51,612	2·22	50,989	2·21	73,708	2·87	3,829
Blyth Valley	167,649	2·06	164,285	2·10	165,494	2·14	10,130
Castle Morpeth	n/a	n/a	59,915	1·84	60,000	1·95	4,129
Tynedale	53,667	1·52	74,155	2·18	54,446	1·63	4,818
Wansbeck	200,846	3·16	245,480	3·89	315,995	4·78	9,675
Total of Districts	491,467		616,824		692,643		35,636
North Yorkshire							
Craven	10,107	0·72	12,033	0·83	11,981	0·77	2,368
Hampleton	55,997	1·76	40,410	1·22	50,197	1·45	4,971
Harrogate	105,952	2·38	70,869	1·66	49,045	1·12	6,235
Richmondshire	30,491	1·46	40,475	2·00	38,132	1·77	2,848
Rydale	23,367	1·00	25,947	1·14	27,876	1·18	3,828
Scarborough	61,536	1·28	88,337	1·87	124,041	2·50	7,535
Selby	43,568	1·13	56,582	1·44	117,220	2·83	5,593
York	71,015	1·20	139,533	2·27	92,924	1·45	10,773
Total of Districts	402,033		474,186		511,416		44,151

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Nottinghamshire							
Ashfield	361,246	4·45	272,192	3·56	363,300	4·70	11,163
Bassetlaw	247,430	3·16	157,000	2·11	167,000	2·20	10,231
Broxtowe	117,820	2·14	96,938	1·70	94,587	1·63	6,976
Gedling	47,242	1·23	39,024	0·97	57,445	1·32	5,993
Mansfield	383,889	4·08	370,392	4·36	340,017	3·83	10,649
Newark	125,605	2·22	155,353	2·78	105,859	1·74	8,317
Nottingham	1,919,165	5·12	1,861,725	5·02	1,317,000	3·72	47,447
Rushcliffe	119,174	3·40	110,000	3·06	168,200	4·61	4,681
Total of Districts	3,321,571		3,062,624		2,613,408		105,457
Oxfordshire							
Cherwell	105,701	1·60	104,895	1·59	100,000	1·44	8,600
Oxford	347,000	5·32	268,204	3·93	245,785	3·58	10,263
South Oxfordshire	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	194,918	2·96	7,951
Vale of White Horse	n.a.	n.a.	71,029	1·47	61,323	1·26	6,388

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
West Oxfordshire	54,911	1·54	61,784	1·48	79,220	2·03	5,264
Total of Districts	507,612		505,912		681,246		38,466
Salop							
Bridgnorth	35,200	1·52	31,236	1·38	33,348	1·45	3,767
North Shropshire	29,390	1·12	17,537	0·70	26,390	1·01	3,668
Oswestry	29,030	1·72	26,030	1·60	29,741	1·81	2,851
Shrewsbury and Atcham	76,385	1·80	100,685	2·19	110,125	2·26	7,216
South Shropshire	26,098	1·52	27,953	1·68	24,244	1·49	1,954
The Wrekin	421,129	4·84	491,692	5·71	395,828	4·07	11,458
Total of Districts	617,232		695,133		619,676		30,914

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Somerset							
Mendip	55,980	1·36	148,438	3·14	148,363	3·11	6,755
Sedgemoor	67,247	1·43	81,359	1·78	87,037	1·82	6,845
Taunton Deane	205,122	3·32	198,464	3·26	238,674	3·65	8,704
West Somerset	22,543	1·25	26,954	1·59	5,900	0·33	2,150
Yeovil	106,987	1·43	126,470	1·86	103,444	1·51	12,167
Total of Districts	457,884		581,685		583,418		36,621
Staffordshire							
Cannock Chase	166,120	2·53	194,700	3·11	217,527	3·37	8,983
East Staffordshire	94,037	2·41	87,054	2·11	47,146	1·12	7,206
Lichfield	111,141	2·48	138,100	3·11	139,880	3·20	6,673
Newcastle under Lyme	92,454	1·13	114,240	1·49	138,384	1·83	12,398
South Staffordshire	67,723	1·44	69,615	1·53	66,693	1·39	6,681
Stafford	98,200	1·72	103,811	1·95	197,019	3·76	8,539
Staffs. Moorlands	38,572	1·79	44,001	2·09	53,500	2·42	4,285
Stoke-on-Trent	149,488	0·85	121,769	0·72	155,859	0·89	29,401
Tamworth	275,531	4·05	351,874	4·94	206,594	2·83	7,999
Total of Districts	1,093,266		1,225,164		1,222,602		92,170
Suffolk							
Babergh	69,576	1·59	45,100	1·06	56,700	0·89	5,339
Forest Heath	87,432	2·60	123,499	3·49	149,179	4·02	4,794
Ipswich	386,559	5·09	555,123	6·88	704,171	8·42	12,131
Mid Suffolk	148,130	3·91	135,117	3·67	178,546	4·65	4,913
St. Edmundsbury	132,016	2·00	117,465	1·88	155,798	2·43	9,264
Suffolk Coastal	180,318	4·30	123,074	3·02	89,232	2·09	6,122
Waveney	73,509	1·47	95,200	1·87	160,300	3·01	6,498
Total of Districts	1,077,640		1,194,583		1,473,926		49,061

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Surrey							
Elmbridge	127,635	2·46	67,770	1·16	107,440	1·84	6,082
Epsom and Ewell	62,376	2·43	45,178	1·81	47,949	1·91	2,496
Guildford	189,650	2·79	264,195	3·95	327,340	4·78	7,644
Mole Valley	134,292	3·21	N/A	N/A	194,774	5·12	4,894
Reigate and Banstead	86,703	1·62	278,409	4·97	127,995	2·51	7,483
Runnymede	82,000	2·20	88,700	2·35	163,079	4·24	4,469
Spelthorne	85,009	1·90	154,000	3·31	140,000	2·94	4,633
Surrey Heath	201,890	6·08	187,129	6·05	152,333	5·00	3,837
Tandridge	77,199	2·16	106,575	2·74	115,639	2·99	4,406
Waverley	114,655	2·02	137,520	2·51	210,934	3·84	6,997
Woking	70,000	1·54	94,000	2·05	70,000	1·48	4,951
Total of Districts	1,231,409		1,423,476		1,657,483		57,892

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Warwickshire							
North Warwickshire	87,595	2·52	69,291	2·32	65,200	2·21	4,851
Nuneaton	230,533	3·05	282,183	3·71	260,596	3·29	9,559
Rugby	52,060	1·20	N/A	N/A	107,913	2·31	5,680
Stratford-on-Avon	96,698	1·59	78,801	1·31	88,018	1·44	7,604
Warwick	155,766	2·42	129,900	2·09	139,669	2·19	8,116
Total of Districts	622,652		560,175		661,396		35,810
West Sussex							
Adur	28,027	0·93	37,250	1·22	36,237	1·15	4,047
Arun	85,272	1·79	124,153	2·50	119,582	2·31	5,532
Chichester	66,148	1·14	74,787	1·19	87,135	1·36	7,373
Crawley	103,651	1·20	112,823	1·25	146,108	1·39	13,040
Horsham	80,605	1·58	73,286	1·47	75,000	1·42	6,360
Mid Sussex	21,589	0·62	25,734	0·72	33,581	0·89	5,081
Worthing	17,010	0·73	19,908	0·86	17,215	0·72	3,114
Total of Districts	402,302		467,941		514,858		44,547
Wiltshire							
Kennet	54,356	1·31	51,034	1·21	44,218	1·04	5,947
North Wiltshire	166,052	3·02	151,554	2·70	154,941	2·77	7,823
Salisbury	121,500	1·86	117,000	1·88	125,000	1·97	8,541
Thamesdown	498,783	4·05	508,983	4·53	467,538	4·02	14,496
West Wiltshire	264,317	4·73	202,585	3·73	194,662	3·65	7,229
Total of Districts	1,105,008		1,031,156		986,359		44,036

Gross tenants arrears 1982-83 to 1984-85

	1982-83 gross tenants arrears	1982-83 per cent. of rent roll	1983-84 gross tenants arrears	1983-84 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 gross tenants arrears	1984-85 per cent. of rent roll	1984-85 number of dwellings
Totals by class							
Isles of Scilly	1,053	1·21	1,248	1·34	825	0·78	122
Metropolitan Districts	53,695,141	5·41	59,944,636	6·02	64,959,895	6·26	1,425,812
Greater London Council	6,667,381	18·78	3,242,359	9·66	2,930,816	8·56	41,500
City of London	46,250	2·44	58,218	2·55	77,811	3·30	2,307
Inner London Boroughs	34,538,592	10·31	45,665,827	13·17	57,527,702	15·75	419,721
Inner London and City	34,584,842	10·27	45,724,045	13·10	57,605,513	15·67	422,028
Outer London Boroughs	20,488,351	6·70	23,633,745	7·45	25,303,960	7·76	365,672
Total All London	61,740,574	9·11	72,600,149	10·37	85,821,136	11·79	829,200
Districts England	45,484,094	2·67	46,043,190	2·70	48,260,323	2·76	2,307,810
Total all Authorities	160,920,862	4·77	178,589,223	5·25	199,060,832	5·66	4,562,994

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 20 February 1986

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Assistant Bishops

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the total cost to the Church Commissioners in each of the last 10 years of the stipends, establishment and staff of assistant bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners do not have a record of all the information requested. However, the information they do have about the cost to the commissioners of the stipends, housing and official expenses of full-time assistant bishops is as follows:

Year	*Stipends* £	*Housing* £	*Other expenses of office* £	*Total* £
31 March 1976	13,960	522	n/a	—
31 March 1977	15,208	478	n/a	—
31 March 1978	15,968	139	n/a	—
31 March 1979	17,560	733	n/a	—
31 March 1980	20,820	†679	11,754	33,253
31 March 1981	18,900	†219	7,766	26,885
31 March 1982	15,430	†236	6,033	21,699
31 March 1983	17,280	*†57,108	6,386	80,774
31 March 1984	19,010	†1,419	6,747	27,176
31 March 1985	20,420	†2,712	5,418	28,550

n/a Not available.
* This figure includes a capital grant towards purchase costs.
† These figures relate to the calendar year ending the previous December.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the total cost to the Church Commissioners in each of the last 10 years of the stipends, establishment and staff of suffragan bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners do not have a record of all the information requested. However, the information they do have about the cost to the commissioners of the stipends, housing and official expenses of suffragan bishops is as follows:

Year	*Stipends* £	*Housing* £	*Other expenses of office* £	*Total* £
31 March 1976	215,350	19,019	n/a	—
31 March 1977	233,758	*24,991	n/a	—
31 March 1978	245,440	21,596	n/a	—
31 March 1979	269,925	*111,265	n/a	—
31 March 1980	325,500	†34,078	176,986	536,564
31 March 1981	407,030	*†211,758	213,399	832,187
31 March 1982	506,520	†47,110	235,194	788,824
31 March 1983	567,315	†68,683	259,233	895,231
31 March 1984	624,015	*†139,801	301,071	1,064,887
31 March 1985	680,960	*†119,231	312,206	1,112,397

n/a Not available.
* This figure includes capital grants e.g. purchase or improvement grants.
† These figures relate to the calendar year ending the previous November.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of all assistant bishops in the Church of England, the date of appointment and the diocese to which attached, for whose stipends the Church Commissioners are not in any way responsible.

Sir William van Straubenzee: There are no full-time assistant bishops for whose stipend the commissioners are not in any way responsible. Those part-time assistant bishops for whose stipends the commissioners are not in any way responsible are:

Name	Appointment	Diocese
Maddocks, M. H. St. John	1983	Bath and Wells
Wheeldon, P. W.	1977	Wakefield
De Pina Cabral, D. P.	1976	Europe
Fisher, R. L.	1985	Ely
Marshall, M. E.	1984	London
Pickard, S. C.	1984	Worcester

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, (1) what was the annual cost, to the latest convenient date, to the Church Commissioners of the upkeep of the staffs of suffragan bishops;

(2) what was the annual cost, to the latest convenient date, to the Church Commissioners of the upkeep of the staffs of assistant bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners do not have the information necessary to answer these questions.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of all assistant bishops, the date of appointment and the diocese to which attached for whose stipends the Church Commissioners are in whole or in part responsible.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners are responsible in whole or in part for the stipends of two full-time assistant bishops and eight part-time assistant bishops and these are as follows:

Name	Date	Diocese
Full-time		
Gill, K. E.	1980	Newcastle
Franklin, W. A.	1978	Peterborough
Part-time		
Warren, C. A.	1983	Derby
Mort, J. E. L.	1972	Leicester
Flagg, J. W. H.	1978	Liverpool
Arden, D. S.	1981	London
Knapp-Fisher, E. G.	1976	London
	1975	Southwark
Capper, E. M. H.	1981	Southwark
	1973	Europe
Dehqani-Tafti, H. B.	1982	Winchester
Gordon, A. R. M.	1984	Canterbury
		Southwark

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the annual cost, to the latest convenient date, to the Church Commissioners of the stipends of assistant bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The annual cost to the Church Commissioners of the stipends of the two full-time assistant bishops was £20,420 at 31 March 1985.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the annual cost, to the latest convenient date, to the Church Commissioners of the stipends of suffragan bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The annual cost to the Church Commissioners of the stipends of suffragan bishops as £680,960 at 31 March 1985.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the annual cost, to the latest convenient date, to the Church Commissioners of the residences of assistant bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The annual cost to the Church Commissioners of the residences of the two full-time assistant bishops in 1984 (and paid by the commissioners in 1985) was £2,712.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the annual cost, to the latest convenient date, to the Church Commissioners of the residence of suffragan bishops.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The annual cost to the Church Commissioners of the residences of the 64 suffragan bishops in 1984 (and paid by the commissioners in 1985) was £57,612.

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of the suffragan bishops, the date of appointment and the diocese to which attached for whose stipends the Church Commissioners are in whole or in part responsible.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The information is as follows:

Name		Date of Appointment	Diocese
McCullagh, N.	Taunton	29 January 1986	Bath and Wells
Buchanan, C. O.	Aston	25 July 1985	Birmingham
Watson, R. C. C.	Burnley	7 April 1970	Blackburn
Harland, I.	Lancaster	24 May 1985	Blackburn
Frith, P. J.	Malmesbury	30 November 1983	Bristol
Third, R. H. M.	Dover	20 September 1980	Canterbury
Hardy, R. M.	Maidstone	30 November 1980	Canterbury
Hacker, G. L.	Penrith	10 October 1979	Carlisle
Roxburgh, J. W.	Barking	30 June 1983	Chelmsford
Coote, R. N.	Colchester	22 February 1966	Chelmsford
Bond, C. D.	Bradwell	29 September 1976	Chelmsford
Brown, R.	Birkenhead	1 May 1974	Chester
Sargeant, F. P.	Stockport	25 January 1984	Chester
Docker, I. C.	Horsham	1 February 1975	Chichester
Ball, P. J.	Lewes	18 October 1977	Chichester
Arnold, K. A.	Warwick	1 October 1980	Coventry
Richmond, F. H. A.	Repton	30 January 1986	Derby
Ball, M. T.	Jarrow	10 October 1980	Durham

Name		Date of Appointment	Diocese
Roe, W. G.	Huntington	1 November 1980	Ely
Coleman, P. E.	Crediton	2 July 1984	Exeter
Newring, K. A.	Plymouth	2 February 1982	Exeter
Walsh, G. D. J.	Tewkesbury	29 January 1986	Gloucester
Wilcox, D. P.	Dorking	30 January 1986	Guildford
Wood, S. M.	Ludlow	3 December 1981	Hereford
Rees, L. L.	Shrewsbury	1 November 1980	Lichfield
Waller, J. S.	Stafford	25 January 1979	Lichfield
Mayfield, C. J.	Wolverhampton	29 November 1985	Lichfield
Hawker, D. G.	Grantham	29 September 1972	Lincoln
Tustin, D.	Grimsby	25 January 1979	Lincoln
Henshall, M.	Warrington	1 February 1976	Liverpool
Klyberg, C. J.	Fulham	25 March 1985	London
Santer, M.	Kensington	7 January 1981	London
Thompson, J. L.	Stepney	3 October 1978	London
Butler, T. F.	Willesden	29 November 1985	London
Masters, B.	Edmonton	20 December 1984	London
Scott, C. J. F.	Hulme	13 September 1984	Manchester
Galliford, D. G.	Bolton	13 September 1984	Manchester
Tytler, D.	Middleton	22 July 1982	Manchester
Dudley-Smith, T.	Thetford	7 January 1981	Norwich
Burrows, S. H.	Buckingham	18 October 1974	Oxford
Meyer, C. J. E.	Dorchester	25 January 1979	Oxford
Foley, G.	Reading	22 July 1982	Oxford
Dennis, J.	Knaresborough	10 October 1979	Ripon
Bartleet, D. H.	Tonbridge	23 October 1982	Rochester
Farmbrough, D. J.	Bedford	27 October 1981	St. Albans
Pillar, K. H.	Hertford	2 February 1982	St. Albans
Devenport, E. N.	Dunwich	30 September 1980	St. Edmundsbury & Ipswich
Neale, J. R. G.	Ramsbury	1 February 1974	Salisbury
Kirkham, J. D. G.	Sherborne	1 December 1976	Salisbury
Persson, W. M. D.	Doncaster	23 July 1982	Sheffield
Selby, P. S. M.	Kingston	29 November 1984	Southwark
Hall, A. P.	Woolwich	29 November 1984	Southwark
Wood, W. D.	Croydon	25 July 1985	Southwark
Darby, H. R.	Sherwood	24 June 1985	Southwell
Llewellin, R. A.	St. Germans	3 November 1985	Truro
Hare, T. R.	Pontefract	21 September 1971	Wakefield
Manktelow, M. R. J.	Basingstoke	1 May 1977	Winchester
Cartwright, D.	Southampton	2 July 1984	Winchester
Dumper, A. C.	Dudley	1 April 1977	Worcester
Snelgrove, D. G.	Hull	29 May 1981	York
Barker, C. C.	Selby	1 May 1983	York
Bates, G.	Whitby	9 June 1983	York
Weeks, A. W. M.	Bishop in Europe	2 July 1980	Europe
Vacant	Lynn		Norwich

Mr. William Powell asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list in the *Official Report* the names of all suffragan bishops in the Church of England, the date of appointment and the diocese to which attached, for whose stipends the Church Commissioners are not in any way responsible.

Sir William van Straubenzee: There are no such suffragan bishops.

PRIME MINISTER

Family Life (Development)

Q73. **Mr. Soames** asked the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to promote the development of family life.

The Prime Minister: The development of family life is above all a responsibility of the members of families themselves. But the Government of course recognise the central importance of family life. They have sought to provide a framework of taxation, social security and other policies which take account of the need to protect and encourage family life.

So far as taxation is concerned, the married man's personal allowance is now at its highest level in real terms since the second world war. We shall be publishing shortly a Green Paper on personal taxation, which will set out the option of moving to a new system in which allowances are transferable between husband and wife.

On social security, the position of families has been protected and improved since 1979. Most of the main benefits available to families have increased in real terms, including family income supplement. The White Paper in the "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691) contains new proposals designed to help low-income families. Other specific areas in which Government policy has supported family life include:

Encouraging wider home ownership, especially among young people; substantial increases in grants to voluntary organisations which assist families; measures to support those who provide care within families for elderly or disabled relatives; increased emphasis on encouraging school attendance and combatting truancy.

In addition, the impact of particular proposals on family life is one of the considerations which is taken into account in the development of the whole range of Government policies.

Westland plc

Q82. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister whether she was informed about any action which was to be taken, or which had been taken, against an official in the Cabinet Office in relation to his or her conduct in contacting the private offices of Ministers to see whether they would be available for a meeting about Westland plc on Friday 13 December; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to what I told the House on 23 January, at column 449-60.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what action her office took on 7 January on being informed by the Attorney-General's office of his approach to the head of the Civil Service on the setting up of a leak inquiry.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the full account which I gave to the House in my statement on 23 January, at columns 449-60, and in the debate on 27 January, at columns 651-58.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Frank Field asked the Prime Minister if she will state the number of letters her office has received on the question of Sunday trading; and if this total can be broken down into those who are for or against the proposed reform.

The Prime Minister: The Government have received about 100 representations in favour of our proposals and about 34,000 against since the debate on the Auld report in the House of Commons in May last year.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister how many persons are employed in *(a)* the Civil Service, *(b)* local government, *(c)* nationalised industries, *(d)* the police service, *(e)* non-governmental public bodies and *(f)* the armed forces at the most recent available date; and what were the corresponding figures in 1979.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom figures for public sector employment on a full-time equivalent basis are as follows:

Thousands

	Mid-year	
	1979	*1985*
Civil Service	724	596
Her Majesty's Forces	314	326
National Health Service	975	1,026
Other central government	200	198
Police*	172	182
Other local authorities	2,196	2,090
Nationalised industries		
actual	1,818	1,124
excluding corporations subsequently privatised	(1,455)	(1,124)
Other public corporations†		
actual	190	117
excluding corporations subsequently privatised	(171)	(117)

* Including civilians.
† Excluding trading funds.
Sources: Her Majesty's Treasury and *Economic Trends* December 1985.

The number of staff in non-departmental public bodies (excluding English and Welsh water authorities) were 147,000 in 1979 and 138,000 in 1985. These are included in the above figures for public sector employment.

Community Service Projects

Mr. Irving asked the Prime Minister if she will estimate how many people have been involved in community service schemes supported by the Government in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: As I explained in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 24 July 1985, at columns 535-37, the concept of "community service" is very wide. Some (but not all) of the work done by or through voluntary organisations which are funded by Government Departments under various powers may be described as "community service", but it is not practicable to identify the numbers of people involved, often on a voluntary or part-time basis, in such a variety of social and environmental projects. I regret that no estimate can therefore be made of the total numbers of people involved in Government supported community service schemes. Some information is, however, available about the number of persons who have taken part in schemes which have enabled unemployed people to offer service to the community, and I shall write to my hon. Friend about this.

Engagements

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

Mr. Marlow asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 20 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I shall attend a reception to mark the 75th anniversary of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf.

"Question of Procedure for Ministers"

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Prime Minister if, given that extracts from the 1976 edition of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" have been published, she will now authorise the publication of the complete document.

The Prime Minister: No.

Advisory Board of Research Councils

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Prime Minister if she receives any representations or advice on the composition of the Advisory Board of Research Councils; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Appointments to the Advisory Board of Research Councils are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, who consults other Government Departments and the Chief Scientific Adviser (Cabinet Office). The composition of the Advisory Board of Research Councils is set out in "Framework for Government Research and Development" Cmnd: 5046.

ENERGY

North Sea Oil

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what percentage of North sea oil supply contracts valued at more than £100,000 were won by British companies, in each of the five years before, and after, November 1975; and what was the cash value of these contracts in each of these 10 years.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The first year for which figures are available is 1974. The information requested for the remaining years is as follows:

Year	*UK Value £ million*	*UK Percentage Share*
1974	516	40
1975	613	52
1976	591	57
1977	806	62
1978	1,037	66
1979	2,111	79
1980	1,679	71

Sizewell Inquiry

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects the report of the Sizewell public inquiry to be published.

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend has made it clear that he will consider the date of publication when he has received the inspector's report.

Health and Safety

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many persons have been *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in the nuclear industry in each year since 1960.

Mr. Goodlad [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 December 1985, c. *250*]: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Mr. Mayhew) on 31 January 1980 to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Mr. Beaumont-Dark) which gives figures for deaths and injuries resulting in more than three days absence from normal work in the nuclear industry, for the period up to 1979. Figures for later years, on the same basis, are as follows:

	Fatal injuries	*All injuries (including fatal)*
1980	1	591
1981	1	581
1982	1	504
1983	2	462
1984	0	513

Notes:

1. The figures relate to operators' employees at sites operated by the Central Electricity Generating Board, the South of Scotland Electricity Generating Board, British Nuclear Fuels plc and establishments of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority concerned with nuclear research and development. The injuries included are those resulting in more than three days absence from normal work.
2. The fatalities were the result of industrial accidents: none was related to radiological hazards.
3. The definition of all injuries is not consistent with that used by the National Coal Board in the answer given on 19 December 1985, at columns 250-51.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

New Companies

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many new companies were registered in Scotland during each of the years from 1975 to 1985.

Mr. Howard: New company incorporations in Scotland for calendar years are:

	Number
1975	2,250
1976	2,266
1977	2,327
1978	2,955
1979	3,514
1980	3,270
1981	3,475
1982	4,211
1983	4,718
1984	4,976
1985	5,417

Airbus

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what preliminary consideration has been made by his Department of the possible new Airbus A330 and A340; if an assessment has been made of the proposed British input to this venture; what information he has on the technology involved in the new proposed wing structure; if he will take steps to encourage this new venture; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: My Department has had preliminary discussions with British Aerospace about these possible new programmes, and contacts with the company will be continuing. British Aerospace is still considering the extent of its own involvement in the design and development of a new wing for the aircraft. I have no information as yet on the technology involved in the proposed new wing. British Aerospace has indicated that it would expect in due course to apply for Government launch aid in respect of its participation in these programmes.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what information he has as to the proportion of the production of the British Aerospace

industry represented by the Airbus A320; what information he has as to the proportional contribution of the industry to the manufacture of the Airbus A320; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what information he has as to how many Airbus A320s have been firmly ordered, and by which airlines; how many options exist for this aircraft, and from which airlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Paraquat

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which countries have imposed restrictions on the importation of paraquat from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Alan Clark: Such information is not collected comprehensively, but the only instance known to me where the importation of paraquat is restricted is Finland.

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will impose new safety conditions under which paraquat is exported to Third world countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which Ministers or officials in his Department, other than the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) Ms. Colette Bowe and Mr. John Mogg, saw the letter from the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), to the Solicitor-General, between the time of receipt of a copy at his Department and the release of part of its contents to the Press Association on 6 January.

Mr. Channon: I have nothing to add to what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said in her statement on 23 January and in the debate on 27 January.

Ms. Colette Bowe

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether Ms. Colette Bowe was temporarily suspended from any of her functions as Director of Information at his Department between 22 and 29 January.

Mr. Channon: No.

PCW Syndicate (Inquiry)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he intends to publish his Department's inquiry into the affairs of PCW.

Mr. Howard: PCW is a subsidiary of Minet Holdings plc, which is under investigation by inspectors appointed under section 165 of the Companies Act 1948. The question of publication will be considered when a report is received from the inspectors.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Credit Control

Mr. Speller asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the present correlation between dependent credit control departments in the banking system and the rate of failure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Government set out their conclusions on the internal and external prudential controls needed on bank lending in their White Paper "Banking Supervision" (Cmnd. 9695). This states the Government's intention that the maintenance of appropriate internal control systems should become an explicit statutory requirement.

Foreign Currency Expenditure

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what authority the exchange equalisation account is used to meet the Government's own foreign currency expenditure.

Mr. Ian Stewart: Under section 1(3) of the Exchange Equalisation Account Act 1979. The Government Departments concerned account to Parliament for their expenditure in the normal way.

Venture Capital Investment

Mr. Chope asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how the current level of venture capital investment in the United Kingdom compares with that prior to June 1979.

Mr. MacGregor: According to figures published in the January 1986 edition of "UK Venture Capital Journal", the total capital raised by independent venture capital funds in 1985 is estimated to have reached £273 million per annum compared with some £10 million in 1979.

THE ARTS

Theatres and Concert Halls

Mr. Alton asked the Minister for the Arts if he will make a further statement on the effect of metropolitan authorities' abolition on grants available to theatres and concert halls.

Mr. Luce: I was able to give the Arts Council £25 million as the central Government contribution to post-abolition funding. I believe that the council is the most suitable organisation to allocate this money. However, responsibility for funding has to be shared with successor authorities, which are being relieved of substantial precepts. Negotiations are proceeding about the specific funding of certain theatres and concert halls, and I am hopeful that those negotiations will enable the building in question to remain open.

Royal Festival Hall

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts what information he has as to whether the literary centre in the Royal Festival Hall will be retained following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Luce: The South Bank board is considering a number of ways in which it can give more emphasis to

literature in the South Bank centre. The board has already indicated that it does not wish the existing bookspace facility to continue in its present location, but will be considering possible alternative locations.

Arts Council

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Minister for the Arts how many consultants are currently engaged by the Arts Council; what are their areas of activity; and what is the total cost involved.

Mr. Luce: The Arts Council is using the services of three consultants' organisations, in the fields of computing, marketing and personnel management. Consultants are used on an ad hoc basis, and I shall write to the hon. Member when details of the total cost are available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what matters within the internal jurisdiction of the Irish Government have been raised by Her Majesty's Government in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.

Mr. Scott: Policing in border areas in the Republic of Ireland has been discussed under article 9(a) of the agreement, and British and Irish Ministers have authorised officials to undertake further work on matters of mutual concern under article 8 of the agreement, including extradition, the possible harmonisation of areas of the criminal law and the search for measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions the joint chairman of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference, Mr. Peter Barry, has called for a special meeting of the conference in accordance with article 3 of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: The joint chairman of the Intergovernmental Conference, Mr. Peter Barry, has requested a special meeting of the conference on one occasion. The meeting was held on 30 December.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Sayeed asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his policy in offering guarantees or subsidies to Harland and Wolff in relation to specific tenders for warships or naval vessels to be built in the United Kingdom when Harland and Wolff would be in competition with other United Kingdom warship yards for the contract.

Dr. Boyson: It is Government policy not to offer guarantees or subsidies to Harland and Wolff in relation to specific tenders for warships or naval vessels when there is competition from other United Kingdom warship yards for the contract.

Life Expectancy

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the expectation of life at age 16 years for men and women in each of the past 30 years.

Mr. Needham: Expectation of life tables for Northern Ireland do not contain estimates at age 16 years. The figures at age 15 years, for the years for which information is available, are as follows:

Year	*Male*	*Female*
1957	55·32	58·62
1958	55·27	59·14
1959	55·10	59·23
1960	55·19	59·29
1961	55·09	59·39
1962	55·32	59·66
1963	55·26	59·79
1964	55·45	60·00
1965	55·34	60·04
1966	55·25	60·10
1967	55·46	60·46
1968	55·56	60·50
1969	55·65	60·69
1970	55·24	60·37
1971	55·08	60·58
1972	54·84	60·53
1973	54·37	60·48
1974	53·86	60·86
1975	54·31	60·43
1976	54·16	60·56
1977	54·32	60·54
1978	54·50	60·67
1979	54·60	60·93
1980	54·81	61·13
1981	55·28	61·44
1982	55·67	61·70
1983	56·18	62·12

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the deaths in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years for which records are available attributable to *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Persons*	*Males*	*Females*
Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lungs			
1980	676	522	154
1981	689	511	178
1982	690	510	180
1983	691	526	165
1984	788	568	220
Bronchitis and emphysema			
1980	415	298	117
1981	334	243	91
1982	301	215	86
1983	270	195	75
1984	209	139	70
Ischaemic heart disease			
1980	4,858	2,897	1,961
1981	4,909	2,873	2,036
1982	4,563	2,611	1,952
1983	4,785	2,779	2,006
1984	4,825	2,812	2,013

RUC (Code of Conduct)

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to publish the code of conduct of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Scott: A working party has been established by the Chief Constable to prepare as early as possible this year a code of conduct for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The Chief Constable will be responsible for its publication.

Flags and Emblems Act 1954

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to introduce legislation to abolish the Flags and Emblems Act 1954.

Mr. Tom King: I am considering this matter at present.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prisoners charged with scheduled offences in the latest calendar year were remanded in custody prior to trial for periods between *(a)* nought to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months, *(e)* 12 to 18 months and *(f)* over 18 months for scheduled and non-scheduled offences.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75*]: The length of time spent in custodial remand for persons tried in 1985 and who were in custody at the time of their trial and charged with scheduled and non-scheduled offences respectively was as follows:

Time in custody	*Scheduled offences*	*Non-scheduled offences*
Less than 3 months	121	401
3 months up to 6 months	59	37
6 months up to 9 months	49	21
9 months up to 12 months	52	12
12 months up to 18 months	59	2
Over 18 months	73	0
Total	413	473

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many prisoners for each year since 1980, were remanded in custody prior to trial for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively;

(2) how many prisoners were remanded in custody prior to trial for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, for the latest calendar year and the year to date.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75*]: The information is as follows:

Year	*Scheduled offences*	*Non-scheduled offences*
1980	828	854
1981	1,373	1,092
1982	1,199	1,122
1983	1,154	1,009
1984	1,005	905
1985	931	807

Information for 1986 is not available.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of prisoners on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences, respectively, were *(a)* given a non-custodial sentence, *(b)* given a custodial sentence and *(c)* found not guilty or not proceeded against for the latest calendar year and the year to date.

Mr. Scott: [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75*]: The information in relation to those tried in 1985 is as follows:

Disposal	*Scheduled Offences Per cent.*	*Non-scheduled Offences Per cent.*
(A) Non-custodial Sentence	7·24	11·20
(B) Custodial Sentence	68·36	59·41
(C) Found not guilty or not proceeded against	24·40	29·39

Information for 1986 is not available.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average length of time that prisoners spent on custodial remand for scheduled and non-scheduled offences respectively for the latest calendar year and the year to date.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75*]: The average length of time spent on custodial remand for persons tried in 1985, who were in custody at the time of trial was 39·2 weeks for persons charged with scheduled offences and 5·5 weeks for persons charged with non-scheduled offences.

Information for 1986 is not available.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the average period between remand and trial for prisoners refused bail and charged with scheduled offences in Northern Ireland in the latest calendar year and to date.

Mr. Scott: [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75*]: For persons tried in 1985 who were *(a)* in custody at the time of trial, *(b)* never released on bail and *(c)* charged with scheduled offences, the average time spent on custodial remand was 38·7 weeks.

Information for 1986 is not available.

Non-Scheduled Offences

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons were charged in Northern Ireland with non-scheduled offences; and how many persons were found not guilty of all or some of the offences with which they were charged in the year 1985 and to date.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75-76*]: The information is not available in the form requested, but the number of persons proceeded against for non-scheduled offences in the year 1985 was 49,101. Records on findings of guilt relate only to the principal offence in each case; on that basis, the number of persons found not guilty of non-scheduled offences was 2,848.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give separately for magistrates' courts and Crown courts for 1985 the number of cases involving non-scheduled offences in which pleas of not guilty were entered; in how many of these cases verdicts of not guilty were returned; and in how many of these cases trial was by jury.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *75-76*]: The information requested is as follows:

	1985	
	Crown Courts	Magistrates' Courts
Pleas "Not Guilty" entered	243	6,273
Verdicts "Not Guilty" returned	128	2,720

In all non-scheduled cases tried in the Crown courts, trial is by jury.

Notes:
1. The figures refer only to the pricipal offence.
2. The figures for the magistrates' court include motoring offences.

Female Prisoners

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the average period of custodial remand for female custodial remand prisoners in Northern Ireland for the years 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *78*]: The average number of days spent in custody from first remand to termination of trial for females in 1983, 1984 and 1985 was 125·5, 105·4 and 63·0 respectively. A comparable figure for 1982 is not available.

Belfast Education and Library Board

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total Government budget allocation to the Belfast Education and Library Board for each year since 1979, and the budget allocation for 1986-87.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1986, c. 186-87]: The information is as follows:

"000's

	Number
1979-80	36,135
1980-81	40,233
1981-82	43,273
1982-83	45,041
1983-84	44,420
1984-85	44,550
1985-86*	45,559
1986-87†	48,000

* Estimated outturn.
† Projected.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what effect the £1·6 million cut in the budget allocation to the Belfast Education and Library Board will have on the level of provision by the board of *(a)* nursery schools and *(b)* nursery units.

Dr. Mawhinney [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1986, c. 186-87]: While I am aware that the board has been considering projected expenditure in the nursery sector I have not to date been advised by the board of its decisions nor have I received the board's financial scheme detailing its spending plans for 1986-87. Any proposals to close existing schools or units will require the approval of my Department.

EMPLOYMENT

Warehouse (Brightside Lane)

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what is the status of the Chemical Industry Association's recommendations on the safe warehousing of chemicals; what information he has as to the degree of observance of these recommendations by Laporte Industries at the Brightside lane warehouse; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The Chemical Industries Association's guidelines are voluntary.

The management of the warehouse was responsible for the way in which goods were stored. The storage of chemicals, with the exception of sodium nitrate, was in line with the Chemical Industries Association's general recommendations.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General exactly when the Health and Safety Executive investigation into the Brightside lane warehouse fire began.

Mr. Trippier: The Health and Safety Executive investigation began on the morning of Saturday 15 December 1984.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General exactly when officers of the Health and Safety Executive first saw the Brightside lane warehouse fire.

Mr. David Trippier: On the morning of Saturday 15 December 1984.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General how many officers of the Health and Safety Executive took part in the 1980 visit to the transit shed and warehouse at Brightside lane; and how long the visit lasted.

Mr. Trippier: Two inspectors visited the site on 7 May 1980. There is no record of how long the visit lasted.

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General when South Yorkshire county fire service first officially notified the Health and Safety Executive as dangerous occurrences instances of firemen having been so affected at the Brightside lane warehouse fire as to require medical treatment.

Mr. Trippier: Notification of this incident as a dangerous occurrence from the South Yorkshire and Humberside county fire service was received on 6 February 1985.

Firemen (Smoke Exposure)

Mr. Caborn asked the Paymaster General what level of short-term exposure to smoke he estimates that firemen can reasonably be expected to cope with without undue adverse effect.

Mr. Trippier: Adverse effects from smoke will depend on the products of combustion, and the nature and degree of exposure. Exposure should be kept as low as is reasonably practicable.

Young Workers Scheme

Mr. McNamara asked the Paymaster General whether 17 and 18-year-old full-time agricultural workers are eligible for the young workers scheme; and what instructions he has given to his officials in Yorkshire and Humberside on this matter.

Mr. Lang: Payments under the young workers scheme can be made in respect of 17 and 18-year-olds in agricultural employment as for those in other employment provided the rules and conditions of the scheme are met. Departmental instructions reflect this.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many persons aged 16 and 17 years, respectively, are presently engaged in YTS in the borough of Knowsley; and what increase in numbers he expects over the next year.

Mr. Trippier: At 31 January 1986, the latest date for which statistics are available, there were 1,207 16-year-olds and 94 17-year-olds on YTS in the borough of Knowsley.

Plans for expected numbers of entrants in 1986-87 have not yet been finalised at local authority district level.

Mr. Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many young persons he expects will join the proposed extended YTS scheme *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Knowsley in its first and second year of operation, respectively.

Mr. Trippier: We estimate that around 360,000 young people will enter YTS nationally in 1986-87 and a similar number in 1987-88. Plans for 1986-87 and 1987-88 have not yet been finalised at local authority district level.

Community Industry Scheme

Mr. Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many persons aged 18 years or younger are presently engaged in the community industry scheme in the borough of Knowsley; and what change in numbers there has been over the past year.

Mr. Lang: The Kirkby and Knowsley community industry units both recruit from within the metropolitan borough of Knowsley. In January 1986 they employed 208 young people aged 18 and younger. The corresponding figure for January 1985 was 206.

News International

Mr. Gould asked the Paymaster General whether any work permits have been granted in respect of people recently engaged by News International.

Mr. Lang: In the last 12 months one such work permit has been issued.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Paymaster General whether any application has been received, in respect of the coming financial year, from the Inner London education authority for funding under the technical and vocational education initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: No such application has, I understand, been received by the Manpower Services Commission. It is for each education authority to decide whether it wishes to submit proposals for support under the initiative. I am glad to say that 73 of the 116 education authorities in England, Scotland and Wales are already involved and a further 25 are seeking to participate.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General how many letters he has received requesting an increase in the fees offered to barristers carrying out criminal legal aid work.

The Attorney-General: One; the Lord Chancellor has received three.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General if he will set up an advisory committee to examine the methods of remuneration for barristers carrying out criminal legal aid.

The Attorney-General: The Government's position is as set out in its response to the Royal Commission on legal services.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General how many meetings have been held and on what dates between officials from his Department and the Bar over remuneration for barristers carrying out criminal legal aid; whether officials from other Departments were involved; what further meetings are planned and on what dates; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Officials from the Lord Chancellor's Department met representatives of the Bar on 17 December. That meeting was also attended by officials of my Department and of the Director of Public Prosecutions, because I have responsibility for the level of fees which will be paid to counsel instructed by the Crown Prosecution Service. The Lord Chancellor has told the chairman of the Bar that he wishes to have further discussions.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General when his Department received a copy of the report from Coopers and Lybrand on remuneration for barristers carrying out criminal legal aid.

The Attorney-General: I received a copy of the report under cover of a letter from the chairman of the Bar dated 13 September. The Lord Chancellor received a copy on 16 September 1985.

"New Statesman" (Official Secrets Act)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Attorney-General if he will prosecute the *New Statesman* under the Official Secrets Act for publication of extracts from the 1976 edition of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers".

The Attorney-General: No.

Cabinet Papers

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General under what circumstances *(a)* the Director of Public Prosecutions and *(b)* the police are given access to Cabinet papers relevant to an investigation.

The Attorney-General: The Director of Public Prosecutions and the police would be given access to Cabinet papers where I, having consulted the Secretary of the Cabinet, regard it as necessary for the purposes of an investigation.

Select Committee on Defence

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General if, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column 14, the Solicitor-General will accept an invitation to give evidence to the Select Committee on Defence.

The Attorney-General: The Solicitor-General has indicated to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence that it will not be possible for him to accept the Committee's invitation to appear before them. The Law Officers are not answerable to Parliament for the legal advice which they give to the Government and the established convention is that neither they nor anybody else should be aske to disclose whether, and if so in what circumstances, they have given such advice, let alone what such advice may have been. It was for that reason among others that it was agreed, when the present system of Select Committees was being established, that no Committee would be empowered to monitor the Law Officers or their Department.

Appeals (Delays)

Ms. Harman asked the Attorney-General if he will give figures for the average time a convicted prisoner held in custody has had to wait for appeal against sentence in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will give a breakdown between cases involving sentences of less than and more than one year.

The Attorney-General: Figures for average waiting times for appeals to the Crown court against conviction and/or sentence in magistrates' courts are available only in aggregate. In 1985 the average waiting time in England and Wales for all appellants given a custodial sentence who were dealt with at the Crown court (whether held on custody or on bail, and whether appealing against sentence only or against sentence and conviction) was 5·1 weeks. No breakdown is available by length of sentence passed. Statistics on waiting times for appeals against sentence imposed by the Crown court are not at present collected.

WALES

A5 (Traffic)

Mr. Harvey asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the volume of traffic on the A5 between Gobowen and Chirk, Chirk and Pentrefoelas and on the Chirk-Ruabon road has been counted recently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: An automatic traffic counter, sited at Cerrigydrudion, continuously records the volume of traffic on the A5 between Chirk and Pentrefoelas. Traffic on the A483 between Chirk and Ruabon was last counted in April 1983.

Traffic counting on the A5 between Gobowen and Chirk is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport.

Anglesey

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the inclusion of the southern part of Anglesey within the Bangor travel-to-work area in the development area status of the rest of the island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: We have received two letters about the assisted area status of the southern part of Anglesey.

"Housing for Senior Management"

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the status of the Welsh Office draft circular "Housing for Senior Management"; and if he has any plans to seek to amend planning law in line with the draft circular.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The draft circular has been sent to interested bodies on a consultative basis. Its provisions do not call for amendment to the planning law.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will seek an urgent meeting with the chairman of the Milk Marketing Board to discuss the impact of the Board's policies on the Welsh economy.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I and my officials maintain regular contact with the Milk Marketing Board at all levels on issues of concern for Wales.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Council of Europe

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the scholarships, bursaries, grants and training schemes operated by the Council of Europe for which United Kingdom nationals are eligible; and how many United Kingdom nationals have benefited from each such scheme in each of the previous three years, indicating what proportion of the total take-up each share represents.

Mr. Renton: It has not been possible to obtain the information requested in the time available. As soon as I have the information I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek an increase in the resources of the directorate of press and information of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Renton: No.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the proportion attributable to the United Kingdom of the annual budget of the directorate of press and information of the Council of Europe; and what sum this represents in *(a)* the current financial year and *(b)* the preceding financial year.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom proportion is 16·73 per cent. In 1986 this represents £344,438; in 1985 it was £337,800.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps he has taken to assess the value for money given by the work of the directorate of press and information of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what assessment he has made of the current public impact of the work of the directorate of press and information of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Renton: No such assessment has been undertaken.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of Her Majesty's Government's officials are currently members of Council of Europe committees and working parties.

Mr. Renton: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make it his policy to make a regular quarterly report to Parliament of the activities of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and of the role played by the United Kingdom in the organisation during the preceding three months.

Mr. Renton: No. A copy of the report presented by the chairman of the Committee of Ministers to each session of the Parliamentary Assembly is placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will place in the Library a comprehensive summary of the proceedings of the ordinary part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg from 27 to 31 January.

Mr. Renton: The summary of the proceedings on 27-29 January prepared by the Council of Europe secretariat is already available in the Library. The summary of the proceedings on 30-31 January is expected to arrive shortly.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the principal subjects debated, texts adopted, and other decisions taken at the ordinary part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe held in Strasbourg from 27 to 31 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The subjects debated and texts adopted were as follows:

European Social Charter (Recommendation 1022)
Youth Unemployment (Recommendation 1023)
European Response to Terrorism (Recommendation 1024)
The Situation of Palestinian Refugees (Recommendation 1025)
Amendment of Articles 14 and 25 of the Council of Europe (Recommendation 1026 and 1027)
Scientific Exchanges between Europe and Japan (Recommendation 1028)
European Scientific and technological cooperation (Recommendation 1029)
Monetary cooperation between Europe and Latin America (Recommendation 1030)

Resolutions were also adopted on equality between women and men, the Africa food crisis, Europe's agro food industry and European integration, 30th and 31st annual reports of the European conference of Ministers of Transport.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he monitors the proceedings of ordinary part-sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The proceedings of these sessions are monitored from the record of the proceedings prepared by the Council of Europe secretariat which is received by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps Her Majesty's Government is taking to improve public awareness in the United Kingdom of the work of both organs of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Renton: None. Publicity in the United Kingdom for the work of the Council of Europe is one of the functions of the Council's directorate of press and information.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is seeking through the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to improve public awareness of the work of both organs of the Council of Europe.

Mr. Renton: I currently have no plans to seek such steps.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the existing means of informing *(a)* Parliament and *(b)* the public of the deliberations, decisions and other activities of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and of the Secretariat General; and if he proposes to seek any change in this machinery.

Mr. Renton: Documentation recording the deliberations, decisions and other activities of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and of the Secretariat General is available in the Library.

It is one of the functions of the directorate of press and information to inform the public of these matters. It is not proposed to seek any changes in the existing arrangements.

Mr. Coleman asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the existing means of informing *(a)* Parliament and *(b)* the public of the deliberations, decisions and other activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; and if he proposes to seek any change in this machinery.

Mr. Renton: Documentation on the deliberations, decisions and other activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is available in the Library. It is one of the functions of the directorate of press and information to inform the public of these proceedings. It is not proposed to seek any changes in the existing arrangements.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the signing of a comprehensive test ban treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Renton: We are not aware of such a treaty.

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the implications for the British nuclear deterrent of the proposed comprehensive test ban treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Renton: This is a hypothetical question in the light of the answer I gave the hon. Gentleman earlier today.

Grand Harbour, Valletta (Wreckage)

Mr. Andrew MacKay asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what final settlement

has been reached with the Maltese Government over the clearance of wartime wreckage from Grand Harbour, Valletta.

Mr. Renton: We have agreed to pay costs amounting to approximately £1·7 million for the removal of wartime wreckage in Grand Harbour, Valletta. In addition, the Ministry of Defence waived the costs of the Royal Navy diving detachment which working in close co-operation with the Maltese authorities and contractors provided specialised assistance. We welcome the satisfactory resolution of this problem.

Discrimination Against Women

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government will ratify the convention on discrimination against women signed in 1981.

Mr. Renton: We intend to complete the preparation of the instrument of ratification in the week beginning 17 March 1986 and deposit it with the Secretary-General of the United Nations as soon as possible thereafter.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report on the outcome of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 and 18 February.

Mrs. Chalker: I attended the FAC in Luxembourg for discussions on 17 February. My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, was present for the discussions on 18 February.

The United Kingdom and eight other member states signed the documents embodying the agreement reached by Heads of Government at the Luxembourg European Council on 2-3 December last. In doing so, they expressed the hope that it would shortly be possible for Denmark, Italy and Greece to sign. The Danish Government hope to do so immediately following the referendum in Denmark on 27 February. The Italians and Greeks hope to be able to sign in due course. Ratification procedures will not be set in hand until all member states have signed.

Ministers discussed relations with Turkey in the light of the Turkish request for a meeting of the Association Council. Work is now going ahead on a number of outstanding matters, including the unblocking of some of the aid committed to Turkey, with the aim of holding an Association Council in the autumn.

Ministers discussed relations with Japan. They reaffirmed the importance they attach to the Japanese Government taking steps to reduce Japan's overall trade surplus on the basis of the conclusions it reached in March and October last year. They agreed to resume detailed discussion at the March Foreign Affairs Council.

Ministers made progress in moving towards agreement on the main elements of the Community negotiating mandate on the renewal of the multi-fibre arrangement. There will be further discussion in March.

The Council agreed a mandate to resolve outstanding problems in the negotiations with the EFTA countries on the adaptation of the EC-EFTA agreement to take account of the accession of Spain and Portugal.

The Council agreed to a request from the ACP for a special meeting of the ACP/EEC Council of Ministers to be held on 4 March.

A meeting of the Co-operation Council between the EC and Egypt was held which considered economic and commercial relations in the light of recent developments, including the enlargement of the Community.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Crime Prevention

75. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what plans he has for promoting crime prevention in schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend has undertaken to give serious consideration to making education support grant available for schemes to promote crime prevention in schools. A decision on the activities to be supported by education support grant in 1987-88 will be taken in late spring.

Children (Special Education Needs)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his estimate of the additional public expenditure each year arising from the provision of the Education Act 1981 for assessing the needs of, and preparing statements for, children with special education needs.

Mr. Dunn: The Department does not collect the information which would enable such an estimate to be made. It is clear from a survey carried out by the Association of County Councils in 1985 that it is very difficult to isolate changes arising from these provisions of the 1981 Act from other changes in expenditure on special educational provision.

Schools (Nuclear Information)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps his Department takes to supply to schools information on nuclear matters other than literature distributed from NIREX or British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Department does not supply schools with information on such matters either directly or on behalf of other bodies.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, under the headings of *(a)* London, *(b)* Oxford and Cambridge, *(c)* other south, *(d)* Scotland, *(e)* northern, *(f)* other univesities and *(g)* lay members, he will give the origin by university affiliation of the members of the council of the Medical Research Council; if he will also express these numbers as percentages of the council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Assuming that the hon. Member is referring to current affiliation, the information is as follows:

MRC Council membership for 1985-86

	Number	*Percentage*
Member whose affiliation can be determined:		

	Number	Percentage
London	4	21
Oxford and Cambridge	2	11
Other South	1	5
Scotland	2	11
Northern universities	—	—
Other universities	—	—
Lay members, other than below	2	11
Members from categories where affiliation has no meaning*	8	41
Total Council membership	19	100

* The Council's Chairman and Secretary, the directors of 2 MRC Units, a representative of the House of Commons and 3 members representing government Departments.

There is regular turnover of a proportion of the membership each year.

I also refer the hon. Member to the second part of my reply at column 16, to his question of 3 February 1986.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will name the three principle Medical Research Council boards; if he will give the origin by university affiliation of the members of the three boards; if he will express these numbers as a percentage; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will give the origin by university affiliation of the members of the grant awarding committees of the Medical Research Council for *(a)* neurobiology and mental health, *(b)* cell board A, *(c)* cell board B, *(d)* systems board A and *(e)* systems board B; if he will express these figures as percentages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: These are matters for the Medical Research Council. I have asked the Council to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Lewis Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the number and percentage of United Kingdom medical students at *(a)* London, *(b)* Oxford and Cambridge, *(c)* other south, *(d)* Scotland, (i.e.) northern and *(f)* other universities; if he will give in this form in numbers and percentage terms the location of Medical Research Council units; if he will give the numbers and percentages for unit staff; if he will give the number and percentage of programme grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The information which cannot be categorised precisely as requested, is as follows:

	Full-time and sandwich*	MRC Units	MRC Unit staff†	Programme grants‡
London				
Number	6,123	19	1,442	59
Percentage	32	35	48	50
Oxford and Cambridge				
Number	1,333	14	562	30
Percentage	7	25	19	25
Scotland				
Number	3,243	8	395	9
Percentage	17	14	13	8
Wales and Northern Ireland				
Number	1,412	1	33	1
Percentage	7	2	1	1
Other English				
Number	7,046	13	588	19
Percentage	37	24	19	16
Total				
Number	19,157	55	3,020	118
Percentage	100	100	100	100

* Home (=United Kingdom-domiciled) undergraduate students on pre-clinical and clinical medicine courses at universities (academic year 1984-85).
† As as 1 January 1986.
‡ As at July 1985.

London University Research Project

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to receive the London university research project report on the policy and implementation of the Education Act 1981; if the report will be available to the general public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The report on the research project based at London University Institute of Education is due to be made available to the Department in September 1986. No decision has yet been taken about publication but the findings are expected to be disseminated by the research team at a seminar which is likely to be held in November. It is intended that an invitation to attend the seminar will be extended to the all-party disablement group.

GCSE Examination

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he remains satisfied with the preparations for the introduciton of the GCSE examination; and if he wil make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes. The Secondary Examinations Council, the GCSE examining groups and the local education authorities have all combined to provide a

programme of preparation for the new examination courses which is thorough and of high quality and to which the Department is making a substantial financial contribution. Teachers now need to play their part, in particular by attending the training seminars which are being mounted this term and next. I look to teachers to consider the responsibilities they have to their pupils who will be the first GCSE candidates.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if it is the practice of the appropriate Education Ministers in EEC countries to apply differential payments for teachers in junior secondary schools.

Sir Keith Joseph: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Central Advisory Councils

Mr. Parris asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement as to the future of the two central advisory councils as provided for in section 4 of the Education Act 1944; and if he plans to seek any change in the requirements in section 5 that he should make an annual report to Parliament.

Sir Keith Joseph: In its response to the second report from the Education, Science and Arts Committee, Session 1981-82 (Cmnd. 8648) the Government concluded that there is no need for separate and permanent central advisory councils and that they would take the first legislative opportunity to repeal Section 4 of the Education Act 1944. As explained then, successive Secretaries of State have found it more effective to charge committees of inquiry or independent individuals with specific remits for advice than to refer to permanent councils. The Education Bill introduced in another place therefore includes the proposal that the provision in the Education Act 1944 for two central advisory councils for education be repealed.

The Bill also proposes the repeal of the provision which requires the holder of my office to make an annual report to Parliament. The report generates little interest because most of the facts and statistics contained in it have already been reported to Parliament, or made public in other ways. It no longer justifies the commitment of time and cost made by the Department in its preparation. The bibliography to the chapter relating to the Department in the annual public expenditure White Paper provides a reference point for the main publications about education and science.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those organisations which he has consulted concerning the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill, the date on which the consultation letter was sent out by his Department, and the date by which responses are needed.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is consulting the education committees of the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Society of Education Officers. The consultation letter was despatched on 11 February; responses are required by 4 March.

Education Personnel

Sir Peter Hordern asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will give the number of full-time teachers and lecturers, and part-time, listed separately, in 1960, 1970, 1980, and at the latest available date;

(2) if he will give the number of those employed in education, who neither lecture nor teach in 1980, 1970, 1960 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Chris Patten: The figures available for teaching and non-teaching staff for the years requested are as follows: The latest year for which figures are available on a comparable basis is 1984.

England *Thousands*

Year[3]	*Teaching Staff*[1] *Schools*[3]	*Further Education*[4]	*Miscellaneous/ Divided*[5]	*Universities*[6]	*Non-teaching staff*[2] *Local Authority Education Services*	*Universities*[7]
1960						
Full time	[9] 259	[10] 21	3	[11] 14	76	..
Part-time:						
Numbers	..	..	..	..	86	..
FTE[12]	..	..	..	..	..	..
1970						
Full-time	[13] 351	57	2	33	170	..
Part-time:						
Numbers	..	..	..	..	352	..
FTE[12]	[14] 22	..	..	..	..	..
1980						
Full-time	466	76	4	43	190	43
Part time						
Numbers	[15] 53	..	..	2	456	20
FTE[12]	[15] 23	[16] 22	..	..	197	9
1984						
Full-time	442	78	4	42	170	34

Year[3]	Teaching Staff[1]				Non-teaching staff[2]	
	Schools[3]	Further Education[4]	Miscellaneous/ Divided[5]	Universities[6]	Local Authority Education Services	Universities[7]
Part-time:						
Numbers	[15] 54	..	..	3	434	15
FTE[12]	[15] 24	[16] 22	..	..	189	7

.. not available.
(1) Staff in teaching grades. Not all of them had teaching duties at the date of the count.
(2) Excludes those employed by independent schools and colleges and central government.
(3) Includes maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, grant-aided and independent schools.
(4) Maintained, assisted and grant-aided establishments. No figures are available for independent further education.
(5) Includes service divided between sectors and teacher organisers.
(6) Great Britain. Excludes the Open University and the University of Buckingham.
(7) United Kingdom but excluding Cambridge, the Open University and the University of Buckingham. Excludes craftsmen and supervisors (approx. 5,000 in 1984).
(8) Year is academic year starting in year stated for universities and ending in year stated for all others.
(9) Excludes independent schools: data not available.
(10) Colleges of Advanced Technology included with further education in 1960 and with universities thereafter.
(11) Estimated.
(12) Full-time equivalents.
(13) Includes an element of part-time FTE for independent schools.
(14) Excludes nursery, special and independent schools.
(15) Excludes direct grant special schools.
(16) Only maintained establishments.

Schools (Asbestos)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what grants are available to local education authorities which have school buildings containing dangerous amounts of asbestos.

Mr. Dunn: There are no grants for this purpose. It is for local education authorities individually to accommodate the costs of dealing with asbestos within the total resources, capital and current, available to them.

School Year

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reply to the letter from the Association of Holiday Centres supporting the proposal for a four-term year in schools.

Mr. Dunn: A reply was sent on 17 February.

Mr. Stephen Ross asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in favour of a four-term year for schools in England and Wales;

(2) when he expects to respond to the proposals submitted by the Association of County Councils in favour of a four-term year in schools.

Mr. Dunn: A paper was forwarded last August to my right hon. Friend by the National Association of Head Teachers. More recently the National Association of Holiday Centres Ltd has expressed an interest.

Proposals in favour of a four term year for schools in England have not been submitted to the Government by the Association of County Councils, but I understand that a consultative document on the subject has been recently issued by the Association with a wide circulation as a basis for discussion. I will be interested to see the responses which are made to the document.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Official Secrets Act

13. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an inquiry into the operation of section 2 of the Official Secrets Act in cases of disclosure of Government papers.

Mr. Hurd: No.

Sentencing Policy

16. **Mr. Galley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans for further changes in sentencing policy for serious crimes.

Mr. Hurd: The Government's policy is to provide courts with a full range of sentencing powers, including substantial terms of imprisonment for the most serious offences. We keep these powers under review. I intend to introduce legislation as soon as possible to increase to life imprisonment the maximum penalty for carrying firearms in the furtherance of crime.

Crime Prevention

17. **Mr. Mates** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action his Department is taking to follow up the seminar held at No. 10 Downing street on crime prevention.

Mr. Hurd: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and Border (Mr. Maclean) earlier today.

40. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the crime prevention initiatives being taken by his Department.

62. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he is taking to promote crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The recent crime prevention seminar chaired by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister

resulted in agreement on a range of initiatives by industry, commerce and Government which will be followed up at a seminar to be chaired by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in the summer. They include: a British Standard for car security which will be prepared by the British Standards Institution with the help of the motor manufacturers; the insurance industry will consider what scope there is to encourage policy holders to improve the security of their homes; advisory packages on security in inner city households and commercial premises will be produced; and studies will be established and completed urgently on crime on the London Underground, security on new residential estates and violence to bus crews and to health service staff.

Work is progressing well on the five local crime prevention projects and the national community programme crime prevention initiative announced last autumn. Following encouraging results in London and the Midlands, the "Magpies" television and press crime prevention campaign has been extended to the north of England for a six-week period from 11 February.

43. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has held with local authorities on crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Local authority associations are represented on the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention. There is also regular consultation with individual authorities on crime prevention including the development of the five local crime prevention projects and the national community programme crime prevention initiative announced last autumn. The crime prevention unit in the Home Office in collaboration with the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and the Association of Chief Police Officers, has gathered information on good local crime prevention practice which it is planned to disseminate to local authorities.

45. **Mr. Sedgemore** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will establish a fund providing pump priming finance to selected local schemes involving the community in crime prevention.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Funds are already available under the crime prevention initiative under the community programme as well as through the urban programme and private sponsorship. In addition my right hon. Friend has made funds available to provide co-ordinators for the five local crime prevention projects which he announced last October.

48. **Mrs. Roe** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress made in establishing crime prevention projects with his Department's funding in the five towns selected for this experiment.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Local co-ordinators have been selected in four of the areas, and the local steering committees will shortly be meeting in each area to decide what measures should be taken. The police, local statutory and voluntary agencies, and the private sector are all playing their part. The projects have generated much local interest.

51. **Miss Boothroyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for crime prevention schemes within the Sandwell area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Although my right hon. Friend has no specific plans to introduce crime prevention schemes in the Sandwell area, the chief constable of West Midlands gives a high priority to crime prevention in his force strategy. There are 23 neighbourhood watch schemes in operation, an active crime prevention panel, and a number of new crime prevention initiatives. For example, the police and the district council are exploring the possibility of sending out crime prevention campaign literature with rate demands; the crime prevention panel is working with the press to obtain a regular crime prevention feature in the local newspaper; a conference on security in the offices of building societies and post offices was held on 18 February; and a traders early warning system operates in the area.

59. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to finance crime prevention schemes on Merseyside.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. As part of the expansion of the community programme, however, a substantial number of places are now available for local crime prevention projects. I understand that three such schemes have been approved in Merseyside, two of which are already in operation. Furthermore, funding for crime prevention projects continues to be available through the urban programme.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new measures he is proposing to reduce crime committed by young people; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Our aim is to ensure that the police and the courts have adequate powers to deal with crime, including crime committed by young people, and we are considering a number of specific proposals for stengthening courts' powers to deal with young offenders. The two major crime prevention measures that my right hon. Friend announced last autumn—the establishment of local crime prevention initiatives supported by the Home Office and the inclusion of crime prevention projects in the community programme—are relevant to crimes committed by the young; and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science is also considering a proposal to support schemes in schools to combat juvenile crime.

Civil Defence

18. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider endowing a British university chair for civil defence.

19. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider establishing a research fellowship in civil defence.

25. **Mr. Baldry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make it his policy to establish a research fellowship in civil defence.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friends to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel) earlier today.

34. **Mr. Gerald Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how he will establish whether local authorities are meeting the objectives and priorities he will be setting them on the civil defence register.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Whilst there is no register, I can confirm that monitoring local authority performance is included in the proposed programme for implementing the Civil Defence Regulations 1983.

56. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that the civil defence adviser has sufficient staff to enable him to assess what local authorities are doing to meet their civil defence commitments.

73. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied that the civil defence adviser has sufficient staff to enable him to assess what local authorities are doing to meet their civil defence requirements.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I am satisfied at present, but I shall be looking at this in preparing a staged programme for implementation of the 1983 regulations.

69. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be in a position to start providing regular reports to the House on how local authorities are proceeding with their civil defence requirements.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) earlier today.

Autocrime

20. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to improve crime prevention with regard to rising crime involving motor vehicles.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The action points agreed at the recent crime prevention seminar held by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister included agreement by the British Standards Institution to prepare a British standard for car security with the help of motor manufacturers for publication next autumn. At the same time, the working group on car security of the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention seeks through its publicity to increase the public's awareness of autocrime and the scope for preventing it.

41. **Sir Anthony Grant** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made in the campaign of his Department against motor vehicle theft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley) earlier today.

Prisoner Segregation (Report)

21. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the timetable for the publication of the report of Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons on procedures for segregating prisoners under rule 43 of the prison rules.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has received the report and will be publishing it shortly.

Police Manpower

22. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria he uses to determine the appropriate level of police manpower.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend considers applications for increases in police establishments on the basis of the demonstrated needs of police forces, and in the light of advice from Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary. Among the factors which he takes into account are the current number of police officers and civilian staff; the purpose for which the additional posts are needed; the scope for redeployment of police officers and greater use of civilian staff; the population size and distribution; the level of crime; and the particular policing responsibilities of the area.

Crime Statistics

23. **Mr. Torney** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to increase the information available to his Department on the number and nature of victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: We have no current plans to increase the centrally collated information on victims beyond that supplied by the British crime survey, the regular collection of statistics on homicide and that available to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; information from all these sources is published. However, we do intend to publish an analysis of data available from the 18 police forces who record the fullest information; and information about victims is also collected in specific research studies when appropriate.

32. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department for the most recent period for which figures are available, what is the number of crimes committed each day in England and Wales.

49. **Mr. Hardy** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many criminal offences were committed on an average day in 1985; and what was the number committed on an average day in 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The information available relates to the number of notifiable offences recorded by the police and is published quarterly in Home Office statistical bulletins and annually in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". The average daily number of notifiable offences recorded by the police was 6,950 in 1979 and 9,830 in the period October 1984 to September 1985. Information for the whole of 1985 is not yet available.

54. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Essex as to the total number of crimes reported in Basildon in each of the last three years; and what was the detection rate in each of those years.

Mr. Mellor: The information that is available is of notifiable offences recorded in Essex police force area, figures for which are published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (table s3.1 of volume 3 of the issue for 1984). The clear-up rate in the Essex police force area was 40 per cent. in 1982, 41 per cent. in 1983 and 40 per cent. in 1984.

63. **Mr. Allan Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state the increase since 1979 in the number of victims of crime.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available. I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 23 January, at columns 257-58.

66. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, in respect of the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available, the percentage increase since the 12 months ended March 1979 in all offences, and offences of *(a)* violence against the person, *(b)* burglary, *(c)* theft, *(d)* fraud and forgery and *(e)* criminal damage, respectively.

Mr. Mellor: Figures for 1979 are not directly comparable with those for 1984-85 because of changes made by the new counting rules which were introduced at the beginning of 1980. The increase in the numbers of notifiable offences recorded between 1980 and the 12 months ending 30 September 1985 was 23 per cent. for violence against the person, 41 per cent. for burglary, 28 per cent. for theft and handling stolen goods, 28 per cent. for fraud and forgery and 46 per cent. for criminal damage. The numbers of such offences are published annually in the Command Paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales" and in quarterly Home Office statistical bulletins.

68. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for the most recent period of 12 months for which figures are available, the percentage increase in crimes of violence against the person compared with the 12 months ended in March 1979.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) on 23 January, at column 433.

Licensing Laws

24. **Mr. Greg Knight** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward legislation in this Session to amend the licensing laws affecting England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) on 4 February, at column 102.

42. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to seek to make any change in the permitted hours of opening of licensed premises, in the light of the recent report on opening hours in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) on 4 February, at column 102.

Holloway Prison

26. **Mr. Patchett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in building a new psychiatric unit to replace C.1. unit at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Irving) on 24 January, at column 324.

65. **Mr. Weetch** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in carrying out improvements to CI unit at Holloway prison.

Mr. Mellor: Work began on 17 February on a series of modifications to 10 cells on C1 unit, including replacement of sanitary fittings and plumbing arrangements, recessing of light fittings and radiators, replacement of flooring, improvements to observation within the cells, and redecoration in suitable colours. Improvements are also being made to facilities and accommodation for staff on the unit. This phase of the work, which is expected to be completed by the end of August, will be followed by the provision of an association area and a day room to improve facilities for out of cell activities, which is likely to take a further three months to complete.

Metropolitan Police

27. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now announce his intended budget for the total cost of the Metropolitan police for 1986-87.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on Tuesday 18 February, at column *125*.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the present number and percentage of metropolitan police officers currently employed in the drug squad in *(a)* London and *(b)* the Metropolitan police area.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 January 1986 the strength of the Metropolitan police central drugs squad was 57—some 0·2 per cent. of the total force strength of 26,870. The squad is responsible for major drugs investigations throughout the 40 boroughs and districts which comprise the Metropolitan police district. Other drugs offences are dealt with by officers at divisional level either as part of normal duties or in small units set up from time to time to respond to particular localised problems; I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North West (Mr. Banks) on 13 January, at column *459*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown by district of the civil cases initiated by members of the public against alleged wrongful acts of police officers in the Metropolitan police for 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A breakdown by police district of the 175 such cases initiated during 1985 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the amounts paid in out-of-court settlements of claims arising from alleged wrongful acts of Metropolitan police officers in 1985; what were the amounts paid under awards made by courts in similar cases in 1985; and what was the number of cases initiated in 1985 and the number concluded.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The total amount paid in 1985 by the Metropolitan police in settlement of claims arising from allegations of misconduct by police officers (whether or not formal proceedings were instituted) was £193,588. The total amount paid by the force under awards made by the courts in similar cases during 1985 was £13,949. The number of civil actions initiated against the force in 1985 was 175, and the number disposed of was 68.

Firearms

28. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the number of crimes involving the use of firearms.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 23 January, at column 257.

Crimes (Clearing-up Rate)

29. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average number of crimes cleared up in a year by a Metropolitan police officer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The number of crimes cleared up by the Metropolitan police during 1984 was 122,841. The strength of the force was 26,766 on 31 December 1984. The ratio of offences cleared up to police strength was 4·58, but this figure has very little meaning because crime detection represents only a part of total police effort and because many officers may be involved n clearing up a single offence.

Racial Attacks

30. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to increase the information available to his Department on the incidence of racial attacks.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The guidance which the Association of Chief Police Officers issued in October on the handling of racial attacks drew attention to the importance of obtaining reliable local information about the incidence of racial attacks, in order that police forces should be responsive to such incidents in each area. There are no present plans to collate these records nationally, but the Department regularly seeks information about the nature and extent of racial attacks, and measures being taken to combat them.

Heroin

31. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the members of the Merseyside police authority to discuss heroin sales on Merseyside.

Mr. Mellor: We have received no such request for a meeting, but we should be willing to consider any representations from the police authority about this problem.

57. **Mr. Merchant** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest figures on heroin addiction in the north-east; and what was the comparable figure in 1983.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to addicts notified to the Home Office as addicted to heroin and is given for police force areas in the north-east in the following table. Corresponding figures for 1985 will not be available before the late summer.

Drug addicts notified to the Home Office as addicted to heroin (alone or in combination with other drugs)

Number of persons

Police force area	*New addicts*		*Former addicts*	
	1983	*1984*	*1983*	*1984*
Cleveland	6	2	—	1
Durham	5	5	—	3
Northumbria	9	36	2	6
Total	20	43	2	10

67. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give figures for the known cases of cocaine and heroin addiction for the last six months of 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information on addicts notified to the Home Office relates to 1984. The numbers reported as addicted to heroin and cocaine are given in the following table; corresponding figures for 1985 will not be available before the late summer.

Drug addicts notified to the Home Office in 1984 as addicted to heroin or cocaine

United Kingdom *Number of persons*

	New addicts	*Former addicts*
Heroine alone or with other drugs but not with cocaine	4,547	1,499
Cocaine alone or with other drugs but not with heroin	92	9
Heroin and cocaine together, with or without other drugs	379	186

Sentences (Right of Appeal)

33. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to take steps to seek to give the prosecution a right of appeal against sentences.

Mr. Mellor: We have been considering whether there is an acceptable means of meeting public concern about over-lenient sentences. A number of options will be discussed in a White Paper on criminal justice matters which we intend to publish before long.

Sunday Trading

35. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest numbers of representations, for and against, he has received on the Shops Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Waddington: Since the publication of the Shops Bill I have received 58 representations in favour, and 25,282 representations opposed to the Government's proposals.

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the nature of representations received to date on the Shops Bill *[Lords]*.

Mr. Hurd: I have received representations against the Bill from 0·05 per cent. of the electorate. Although opinion polls always need to be treated with care, it is worth noting that they have consistently shown that about two thirds of the electorate support the Bill.

Prison Discipline

36. **Miss Fookes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a new prison disciplinary action of the kind recommended by the Prior committee on the prison disciplinary system.

60. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a new prison disciplinary tribunal to carry out the adjudicating functions now carried out by prison boards of visitors.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Members to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) on Thursday 13 February at column 516.

Visiting Forces Act

37. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the number of people in Britain who are currently able, in appropriate circumstances, to claim primary jurisdiction under the Visiting Forces Act.

Mr. Mellor: No information is currently available on the number of service authorities in the United Kingdom able to exercise powers under section 2 of the Visiting Forces Act 1952.

Victim Support Schemes

38. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make additional funds available to the victim support scheme.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) on 14 January, at column 545.

44. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what response he has had to his statement on 15 January about financial support for individual victims' support schemes.

Mr. Mellor: We have received only one or two representations referring specifically to the statement made on 14 January, at column 545. Since the beginning of December we, however, have had some 85 letters about the general question of funding for victims support schemes.

Peacock Inquiry

39. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has given its full evidence to the Peacock inquiry.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Home Office submitted written evidence, largely of a factual nature, to the committee on financing the BBC in July 1985, and has since responded to a number of specific requests for further information. In November four officials gave oral evidence at the committee's request. There are no present plans to offer further evidence though, if the committee requests further information, the Department will of course seek to help.

Grievous Bodily Harm

46. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek to amend legislation relating to the offence of grievous bodily harm.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has no such plans at present.

Penal Establishments (Standards)

47. **Mr. Freeson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce a code of minimum standards for penal establishments.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Group Squatting

50. **Mr. Hannam** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take to strengthen the law against organised group squatting in commercial and residential properties.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to amend the criminal law relating to trespass on premises, but my right hon. Friend would be prepared to consider giving support to a measure making it an offence, without reasonable excuse, to enter residential premises as a trespasser.

Prison Building

52. **Sir John Farr** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the new prison building programme.

Mr. Mellor: The current building programme includes 16 new prisons, of which three have now been completed, five are under construction, and the remaining eight are at various stages of planning and design. Together these new establishments will provide some 7,800 new places by the early 1990s. As a result of the public expenditure decisions announced in January, design work is now also planned to start on two further establishments. In addition, we are undertaking an extensive programme of modernisation and redevelopment of the existing prison estate, with major capital work in progress or planned at about 100 establishments including almost all of the Victorian local prisons. This part of the programme includes a number of place producing schemes which will provide overall a further 5,400 new places by the same date, making a total of 13,200 in all.

Family Courts

53. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the implications for juvenile crime policy of the proposals for a family court system.

Mr. Mellor: The Family Court review which my right hon. and learned Friend, the Lord Chancellor, and the Home Secretary have set up will be examining the extent to which the jurisdiction of the juvenile court might be included in that of any future family court. The Government will await the outcome of the review before reaching any conclusions on the implications for the criminal jurisdication of the juvenile court.

Black Business Initiatives

55. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken by his Department in helping black business initiatives.

Mr. Waddington: On 26 September 1985 my right hon. Friend announced an initiative to promote black business enterprise. New business advice centres to provide the full range of local enterprise agency services are being established in inner city areas where there is a significant Afro-Caribbean population. These agencies will be open on equal terms to all sections of the community. The agencies are funded and managed jointly by the Home Office, the local authority, the private sector and local community organisations involved in business advice. The first three agencies are being set up in Birmingham, North London and Lewisham. Staff are being appointed and it is expected that the agencies will be fully operational within the next few months.

In addition, the following local authority posts designed to help the development of ethnic minority businesses are supported by grant from the Home Office paid under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966:

Local Authority	*Title and number of business development posts funded*
Berkshire	1 Business Adviser and clerical support
Blackburn	1 Economic Development Officer
Bradford	1 Projects Officer
Brent	1 Principal Business Adviser
	1 Business Adviser
	1 Finance Systems Adviser and clerical support
Coventry	1 Ethnic Minority Planning Officer
Derbyshire	2 Officers in Derby Small Business Centre
Hackney	1 Business Development Officer
	1 Business Promotion Officer
Hammersmith	1 Business Adviser
Islington	1 Ethnic Minority Employment Development Officer
Kensington and Chelsea	1 Manager
	1 Finance Officer
	1 Technical Services Officer
	1 Research Officer
	1 Secretarial Assistant
	1 Small Business Adviser
Lewisham	1 Business Development Officer
Sheffield	2 Business Development Workers
	1 Training Development Worker
	1 Research Worker
Southwark	2 Black Enterprise Advisers
Tower Hamlets	1 Business Adviser
	1 Community Liaison Planner
	1 Administrative Assistant
West Midlands	1 Initiatives Officer
	4 Business Advisers
	1 Property/Legal Officer and clerical support

Immigration

58. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on the requirement of visas for arrivals from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Waddington: None other than those from the hon. Member.

Police Community Forums

61. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police community forums are now in existence and meeting regularly.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As I said in reply to a question from my hon. Friend on 23 January, a columns 253-54, Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary keep us informed of progress in establishing committees in different areas. They do this through the year in the reports of their inspection visits to forces and we do not therefore have information on the present position across the country as a whole.

Offenders (After-care Hostels)

64. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will lift the current moratorium on his Department's grant-aid for the development of additional after-care hostels for offenders.

Mr. Mellor: While the recently established study of the after-care grant and approved hostels schemes is in progress, it would be premature to take decisions on the long-term funding of accommodation in the community for offenders and ex-offenders, including any programme for the development of additional after-care hostels.

Torture

70. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking with regard to United Nations resolution 32/64 of 8 December 1977 calling on all member states to make a unilateral declaration against torture and embody it in their own legislation.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom has signed, and intends to ratify, the United Nations convention on torture which givs effect to the principles underlying the United Nations declaration that gave rise to the resolution.

Television and Radio (Political Balance)

71. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what means he uses to monitor the political balance of the BBC and of independent television and radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is the responsibility of the broadcasting authorities to ensure that due impartiality is observed in their radio and television programmes as respects matters of political or industrial controversy or relating to current public policy. The Government do not monitor television and radio programmes, but where appropriate it does reflect public concern about programme matters as evidenced by press and Parliamentay exchange and correspondence received from hon. Members and from the public.

British Broadcasting Corporation

72. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met the chairman of the governors of the BBC; and what was discussed.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend met the chairman of the BBC, together with the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority and their respective directors general, on 17 December 1985. he discussed with them public anxieties about depictions of violence and sex on television.

Coal Industry Dispute

74. **Mr. Ray Powell** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many charges were made against miners during the period of the miners' strike, march 1984 to march 1985; what was the nature of the charges; how many were subsequently withdrawn or dismissed; and how many convictions have been proven.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A total of 10,372 criminal charges were brought in connection with the NUM dispute between 13 March 1984 and 5 March 1985 for the following offences. Details of defendants' occupations and the outcome of charges are not recorded centrally; but in a letter which I sent to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) on 21 November 1985 I gave information obtained from police forces about the outcome of charges brought for offences of riot and/or unlawful assembly. A copy of the letter is in the Library.

Offence	*Number of charges*
Murder	3
Assault causing grievous bodily harm	39
Assault causing actual bodily harm	429
Assaulting a police constable	360
Possessing an offensive weapon	49
Riot	137
Unlawful assembly	509
Affray	21
Conduct conducive to a breach of the peace (Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1936)	4,107
Breach of the peace	207
Criminal damage	1,019
Criminal damage with intent to endanger life	4
Arson	15
Burglary	31
Theft	352
Handling stolen property	1
Obstruction of a police constable	1,682
Assault with intent to resist arrest	19
Breach of bail conditions	32
Obstruction of the highway	640
Reckless driving	16
Threats to kill	5
Threats/conspiracy to cause damage	13
Attempt (various offences)	18
Incitement	1
Intimidation (Section 7 of the conspiracy and Protection of Property Act 1875)	275
Unlawful imprisonment	2
Explosives offences	3
Drug offences	1
Railway offences	20
Drunkenness	66
Other offences	296

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what international representations he has received advocating the inclusion of the European convention on human rights into British law.

Mr. Mellor: None that I have been able to trace.

Worm Digging (Alnwick)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the proposed Alnwick district council bye-law relating to worm digging, which was submitted to him by the council in July 1985; when he expects to announce his decision on the rule; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Two local associations of sea anglers have represented that the byelaws will deprive members of an important source of bait, and that the byelaws are repugnant to the public right of fishing. From the evidence produced by the district council, we are satisfied that these byelaws are justified. While the validity of any byelaws is ultimately for determination by the courts, in our opinion the byelaws do not infringe the public right of fishing. Accordingly, we propose to confirm them on 21 February.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in the past 12 months from the Metropolitan police concerning resources to tackle the problem of drug abuse.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Last October the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis made an application for an increase of 262 in the police establishment and 17 in the civil staff ceiling for this purpose. On 21 October my right hon. Friend announced his agreement in principle to an increase of 50 in the police establishment from 1 April. He is considering the balance of the application as part of the urgent review of the specific manpower needs of the force.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has of the percentage of drug addicts who are registered.

Mr. Mellor: Since drug misuse is usually a covert activity, it is not possible to make a reliable estimate of the total number of drug addicts and consequently of the proportion of drug addicts who have been notified to the Chief Medical Officer at the Home Office. Some research carried out in two urban areas in England in 1981 suggested that the number of notified addicts was only about one fifth of the number of opioid addicts in the local population at that time. However, it is likely that the proportion of drug addicts notified varies greatly according to the locality and over time.

Lordna Lucas

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any disciplinary proceedings have been instituted following the award of £26,000 damages against the Metropolitan police in respect of findings of assault, forced imprisonment and malicious prosecution against Lordna Lucas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that the Metropolitan police are considering the implications of the award of damages to Mrs. Lucas.

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been made against officers on duty at the News International plant at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Three up to and including 18 February.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Society of Graphical and Allied Trades and National Graphical Association members have been arrested at the News International plant at Wapping; what charges have been brought against those arrested; how many have been convicted; and in how many cases charges have not been brought or have been dropped.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that information on the trade union membership of those arrested or charged is not recorded.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if officers from forces outside the Metropolitan police district have been placed on standby for mutual aid duties in connection with the current trade dispute at the News International plant at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what powers officers of the Metropolitan police have used to establish road blocks in approach roads in the Tower Hamlets police district and near to the News International plant in Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that roads in the vicinity of the News International plant have been closed on two occasions in accordance with directions which he has issued under section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have been made by the Metropolitan police in connection with the current trade dispute at the News International plant at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: 194 up to and including 18 February.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to how many officers from the metropolitan police have been deployed in each day at the News International plant in Wapping; what are the ranks of each officer; which police district the officers have been drawn from; and what is the average daily cost of the present police operation;

(2) if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what district support have been deployed by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis in the present police operation at the News International plant in Wapping; and how many units have been deployed, on which occasions, and from which police districts the units were drawn.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The numbers and ranks of officers up to the rank of chief superintendent who were deployed at the News International plant at Wapping on each day during the period 25 January to 16 February are as follows. A deputy assistant commissioner, assisted by a commander, is in overall charge of the police operation.

The district support units and other officers deployed at various times at the News International plant have been drawn from districts throughout the Metropolitan police district.

The other information sought either is not readily available or could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Date	*Ch. Supt.*	*Supt.*	*Ch. Insp.*	*Insp.*	*P.S.*	*P.C.*
25 January 1986	1	—	—	11	27	235
26 January 1986	1	—	2	11	21	197
27 January 1986	1	—	2	12	20	200
28 January 1986	1	1	2	12	22	205
29 January 1986	1	1	2	12	23	218
30 January 1986	1	1	2	12	24	227
31 January 1986	1	1	2	11	21	203
1 February 1986	1	1	3	16	30	292
2 February 1986	1	1	3	11	21	210
3 February 1986	1	1	4	12	22	213
4 February 1986	1	1	4	13	20	213
5 February 1986	1	1	2	14	25	245
6 February 1986	1	1	3	14	23	221
7 February 1986	1	1	3	13	23	216
8 February 1986	1	1	3	23	41	402
9 February 1986	1	1	2	13	23	222
10 February 1986	1	1	2	12	21	206
11 February 1986	1	1	2	11	21	210
12 February 1986	1	1	3	9	21	289
13 February 1986	1	1	3	15	34	498
14 February 1986	1	1	2	12	26	255
15 February 1986	3	1	4	41	102	878
16 February 1986	1	1	4	11	22	213

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has made available to officers on duty at the News International plant in Wapping any of the following riot equipment: plastic bullets, riot shields, North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-style riot helmets, shin guards, overalls and long truncheons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The usual protective equipment has been available. Plastic baton rounds have not been made available. Long truncheons are carried only by mounted officers, as standard issue.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to what powers were used by officers of the Metropolitan police to stop two coachloads of Society of Graphical and Allied Trades and Nation Graphical Association members traveling to Southampton; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Newham, North East (Mr. Leighton) 18 February, at column 125. No officers from the Metropolitan police were involved in this incident.

Dr. Skuse (Retirement)

Miss Maynard asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the precise reasons for Dr. Skuse retiring; and on what terms he retired.

Mr. Hurd: Dr. Skuse retired voluntarily, and it is not the practice to divulge details of the reasons for such retirements. Dr. Skuse retired on the terms which are payable to mobile civil servants who retire in the public interest; these are set out in paragraphs 10.3-10.8 of the "Rules of the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme 1974".

Askham Grange Prison

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it costs to keep a woman and her baby in Her Majesty's prison, Askham Grange, for a week.

Mr. Mellor: In the financial year 1984-85 the average weekly cost of keeping a person in custody in Her Majesty's prison, Askham Grange was £283. Information on the cost of keeping a woman and her baby in Her Majesty's prison, Askham Grange, for a week is not available.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will move Lucy Kerr from Askham Grange prison to a prison nearer her home in Peckham.

Mr. Mellor: Any application Ms. Kerr makes for transfer to the south-east will be carefully considered.

New Commonwealth and Pakistan (Visitors)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many visitors from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan were admitted into the United Kingdom in the first six months of 1985 as a result of the representations of hon. Members; what has since become of them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Separate statistics are not maintained of persons given leave to enter following representations from hon. and right hon. Members.

Police Recruitment

Mr. Leigh asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the numbers of police officers recruited in the last 12 months.

Mr. Hurd: In the last seven years the total manpower in the police service, police officers and civilians, in England and Wales has increased by about 16,000 to 159,896 on 31 December 1985. Over 11,000 of this increase were police officers and there were 120,702 police officers on 31 December 1985. Over 5,500 officers were recruited in 1985, and there was a net gain of 129, compared with December 1984.

Direct Broadcasting by Satellite

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take on the report of the review of the Independent Broadcasting Authority into the further development of plans for direct broadcasting by satellite.

Mr. Hurd: On 31 July 1985 my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State announced in another place that we had asked the Independent Broadcasting Authority to carry out a review of the prospects for launching a viable DBS project under sections 37 to 41 of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984.

The chairman of the IBA has now reported to me the outcome of that review. On the basis of the various submissions made to it, the authority has concluded that, in spite of financial and other uncertainties which inevitably exist in a high-risk enterprise of this kind, there is sufficient potential commercial interest in developing a DBS service in this country to justify bringing into force the relevant provisions of the Cable and Broadcasting Act.

The Government welcome this conclusion. The Government's role is not to provide a public subsidy, but to apply the regulatory framework already set up by Parliament which gives the opportunity for potential participants to proceed with a service.

Accordingly, in the light of the IBA's advice that there is commercial interest, I have now decided to bring into force sections 37 to 41 of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984. I am inviting the IBA to advertise for programme contractors for three DBS channels under the arrangements agreed by the world administrative radio conference in 1977. As to the source of satellite provision, it will be open to potential contractors to consider proposals from suppliers either in this country or overseas. I envisage that, in assessing the applications for a DBS contract, the IBA will take account of the overall economic implications for the United Kingdom.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Drugs (Safety)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is taken by his Department to ensure the safety and quality of all drugs imported from overseas for use in the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department operates, on behalf of the licensing authority, a licensing system for medicinal products in accordance with the Medicines Act 1968 and European legislation.

A medicinal product may be imported for sale in the United Kingdom only if a product licence or product licence (parallel importing) has been issued. Before issuing such licences, the licensing authority must be satisfied as to the safety, efficacy and quality of the product. The Department publishes guidelines on the information required by the licensing authority in support of applications for product licences. Once a product licence has been issued, all batches of medicinal products imported for sale must comply with it.

The premises, manufacturing processes and quality assurance procedures of overseas manufacturers are subject to inspection by DHSS medicines inspectors or by the regulatory authority of the country of origin. There are also arrangements for the sampling and testing of imported medicines by the medicines testing laboratory.

The Department has arranged for the establishment by health authorities of arrangements for notifying defects of medicinal products and operates a central defect report centre. The Department also operates the Committee on Safety of Medicines' arrangements for monitoring adverse reactions to medicinal products (literature monitoring and the yellow card system). These warning arrangements apply to imported products as well as to those originating in the United Kingdom.

Hospital Closures

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the hospitals which have been closed down in each health authority during the last seven years and those which are scheduled for closure in each health authority during the next year.

Mr. Hayhoe: For hospitals approved for complete closure between May 1979 and 31 March 1985 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) by my predecessor on 20 May 1985 at columns *317-29*.

The total number of hospitals approved for complete closure between 1 April and 30 June 1985, the latest period for which information is available, is seven.

Details of the individual hospitals are as follows:

Hospitals approved for complete closure 1 April 1985-30 June 1985

Region	*District*	*Hospital*	*Date approved*
Yorkshire	Leeds Eastern	Marguerite Hepton	May 1985
Yorkshire	Leeds Western	Grassington	May 1985
Yorkshire	York	Naburn	May 1985
North West Thames	South Bedfordshire	Priory	May 1985
South West Thames	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton	Westmoor House	June 1985
Wessex	Isle of Wight	Longford	April 1985
West Midlands	South Warwickshire	Monroe Devis Maternity Home	June 1985

I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the other information she seeks as it is not collected centrally.

Rates (Low-paid)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase the amount of assistance available from his Department's budget to help those on low incomes with the payment of rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The White Paper (Cmnd. 9691) sets out the Government's proposals for social security benefits including assistance with rates through housing benefit, which will, however, need to be developed in the light of discussions on the Green Paper on local government finance.

EC (Medical Assistance)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what arrangements have been made with regard to the provision of medical assistance in Spain and Portugal for citizens of the other member states of the European Community; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what progress has been made with regard to the integration of health services in the member States of the European Community; and if he will make a statement on Community plans to provide free and uniform medical assistance for citizens throughout the member states.

Mr. Whitney: Under the European Community reciprocal health care arrangements, nationals of a member state can obtain immediately necessary medical care, or in certain closely defined circumstances, other medical care, when visiting, or retiring to, another member state on the same terms as the insured nationals of that member state. These arrangements now extend to Spain and Portugal. Information about entitlement to free, or reduced cost, medical treatment abroad is set out in leaflet SA30, available from local offices of the Department.

There are wide variations in the funding and organisation of the state health care schemes of member states, nearly all of which involve some charges to the user. I am not aware of any plans to integrate these schemes or to provide treatment on a free and uniform basis throughout the Community.

Hospital Beds (Cheltenham)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of hospital beds available under the National Health Service within the Cheltenham health district; and what was the position in: *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1974.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table.

*Average daily number of available beds in National Health Service hospitals in Cheltenham and District District Health Authority**

Year	*Number*
1974	828
1979	965
1984	939

* Cheltenham Health District in 1974. Part of Gloucester Area Health Authority in 1979.

Abortion Clinics

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the names and addresses of all places currently approved in England and Wales under the terms of the Abortion Act, indicating in which regional health authority each is situated; how many approved beds there are at each, which are approved for day-care; and which are approved to perform abortions after 20 weeks of gestation.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows. Information about places approved in Wales is for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Approved places	*Approved beds*	*Regional Health Authority*
Acland Nuffield Hospital, Banbury Road, Oxford	2	Oxford
Alexandra Hospital, Mill Lane, Cheadle, Cheshire	1	North Western
Alexandra Hospital, Impton Lane, Walderslade, Kent	6	South East Thames
Avenue Clinic, 14 New Church Road, Hove Sussex	6	South East Thames
Bath Clinic, Claverton Down Road, Combe Down	5	Wessex
Beechwood Private Clinic*, Norton Church Road, Norton, Sheffield	20	Trent
Belvedere Nursing Home, Belvedere Road, Scarborough	3	Yorkshire
Blackdown Nursing Home*, Old Milverton Lane, Blackdown, Leamington Spa	33	West Midlands
Bromhead Nursing Home, Nettleham Road Lincoln	1	Trent
BUPA Hospital, Heathbourne Road, Bushey, Watford, Herts	4	North West Thames
BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, Holmwood Drive, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside	4	Mersey
BUPA Hospital, Old Watton Road, Colney, Norwich	4	East Anglian
Calthorpe Nursing Home* 4 Arthur Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham	22	West Midlands
Chalybeate Hospital, Chalybeate Close, Tremona Road, Southampton. Hants	5	Wessex
Chesterfield Nuffield Hospital, Clifton Hill, Bristol	5	South Western
Clare Park Clinic, Clare Park, Crondall Lane, Crondall, Farnham, Surrey	2	South West Thames
Cleveland Nuffield Hospital Junction Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees.	2	Northern
Cotswold Nuffield Hospital, Talbot Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	2	South Western
Danum Lodge Nursing Home* 123 Thorne Road, Doncaster	24	Trent
Dean Park Nursing Home* 23-25 Ophir Road, Bournemouth, Dorset	26	Wessex
Duchy Hospital* Penventinnie Lane, Treliske, Truro	5	South Western
Duchy House Nuffield Hospital Queen's Road, Harrogate	2	Yorkshire
Evelyn Hospital* Trumpington Road, Cambridge	4	East Anglian
Exeter Nuffield Hospital, Wonford Road, Exeter	2	South Western
Fairfield Nursing Home* 68 Russell Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex	29	North East Thames
Fallodon Private Nursing Home* 4 Allerton Park, Leeds	21	Yorkshire
Fitzwilliam Hospital, Milton Way, South Bretton, Peterborough	4	East Anglian
Foscote Private Hospital Foscote Road, Banbury	2	Oxford
Fulford Grange Hospital, Micklefield Lane, Rawdon, Leeds	2	Yorkshire
Garden Hospital, 46-50 Sunny Gardens Road, Hendon, London NW4	3	North West Thames
Highfield Private Hospital, Manchester Road, Rochdale	3	North Western
HRH Princess Christian's† Hospital, 12 Clarence Road, Windsor, Berks	5	Oxford
Hull Nuffield Hospital, Westbourne Avenue, Hull	2	Yorkshire
Ipswich Surgical Nursing Home, 57 Fonnereau Road, Ipswich, Suffolk	2	East Anglian
Leicester Nuffield Hospital Scraptoft Lane, Leicester	2	Trent
Leigham Private Clinic*† 76 Leigham Court Road, London, SW16	29	South East Thames
Marie Stopes Nursing Home* 10 Manstone Road, London NW2	13	North East Thames
Merseyside Nursing Home* 32 Parkfield Road, Liverpool	30	Mersey
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital Osborne Avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2	Northern
New Hall Hospital Bodenham, Salisbury, Wiltshire	4	Wessex
New Victoria Hospital, 184 Coombe Lane West, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey	2	South West Thames
Park Hospital, Sherwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham	6	Trent
Parkfield Private Hospital, Parkfield Road, Rotherham, South Yorkshire	4	Trent
Parkview Clinic*† 87 Mattock Lane, Ealing, London W5	30	North West Thames
Plymouth Nuffield Hospital, Derriford Road, Derriford, Plymouth	2	South Western
Raleigh Nursing Home*† 1A Raleigh Gardens, Brixton Hill, London SW2	19	South East Thames
Robert Nursing Home*† 162 Station Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham	14	West Midlands
Rosslyn Nursing Home*† 15-17 Rosslyn Road, East Twickenham, Middlesex	37	South West Thames
Royal Masonic Hospital Ravenscourt Park, London W6 0TN	4	North West Thames
Salop Nuffield Hospital Longden Road, Shrewsbury SY3 9DP	2	West Midlands

Approved places	Approved beds	Regional Health Authority
Sarum Road Private Nursing Home, Sarum Road, Winchester, Hampshire	4	Wessex
Somerset Nuffield Hospital Staplegrove Elm, Taunton, Somerset	2	South Western
South Manchester Private Clinic* 136 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport	21	North Western
St. Wilfrid's Nursing Home 51 Bawtry Road, Bessacarr, Doncaster	2	Trent
Thames Valley Nuffield Hospital, Wrexham Street, Slough	2	Oxford
Victoria House Nursing Home* Victoria Street, Rochester, Kent	6	South East Thames
Wellesley Hospital Eastern Avenue, Southend-on-Sea	2	North East Thames
Wessex Nuffield Hospital Winchester Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants	2	Wessex
West Sussex Clinic, 48 Shelley Road, Worthing	2	South West Thames
Winterbourne Hospital, Herringston Road, Dorchester, Dorset	4	Wessex
Wisions Nursing Home*† 138 Dyke Road, Brighton	51	South East Thames
Woking Nuffield Hospital Shores Road, Woking	2	South West Thames
Wye Valley Nuffield Hospital Venns Lane, Hereford	2	West Midlands
Yorkshire Clinic, Bradford Road, Bingley, West Yorkshire	6	Yorkshire

* Approved for day care abortions.
† Approved for abortions after 20 weeks gestation.

Drug Addicts (Rehabilitation)

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the rehabilitation facilities currently available for drug addicts in each London borough.

Mr. Whitney: Most rehabilitation facilities in London serve areas greater than that of individual boroughs. We are aware of the following residential rehabilitation facilities in London:

Alwin House 40 Colville Terrace W11
Bowden House London Road, Harrow on the Hill
The Charter Clinic PO Box 119, Fellows Road NW3
The Charter Clinic 1-5 Radnor Walk SW3
City Roads 356-358 City Road EC1
Crescent House 10 St. Stephens Crescent W2
Deliverance International 83 Aldersbrook Road E12
Elizabeth House 94 Redcliffe Gardens SW10
Oak Lodge 136 West Hill SW15
Parole Release Scheme 30 Sisters Avenue SW11
Phoenix House 1 Eliot Bank SE23
The Priory Priory Lane, Roehampton SW15
Project 85 85 Trinity Road, Tooting SW17
Pye Barn Trust 16 The Chase SW4
ROMA 67 Talgarth Road W4
Two Three Five Project 235 Balham High Road SW17

We understand that there are about 45 non-residential facilities in London run by non-statutory bodies which offer a range of services including in some cases a rehabilitation service.

Irish Citizens (Health Service Training)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many Republic of Ireland residents have trained in medicine, nursing and midwifery in England and Wales in the past five years for which figures are available; and what has been the estimated cost to public funds.

Mr. Hayhoe: Precise figures for medicine are not available, but it is estimated that fewer than 10 students whose normal domicile is in the Republic of Ireland are studying at medical schools in England and Wales at any one time. No information is held centrally on the number of residents of the Republic of Ireland undertaking training in nursing and midwifery in England and Wales.

The estimated unit cost to public funds of medical undergraduate training, excluding the possible costs to Local Education Authorities which will depend on individual circumstances, is £120,000 at current prices; the estimated cost of training a registered general nurse is £11,000; and the additional cost of the midwifery course is £8,000.

COMA (Dental Health)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will reconvene the chief medical officers' committee on the medical aspects of food policy (COMA) to examine the relationship between sugar and dental health.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no such plans at present.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received during the past three months concerning the pay and conditions of medical laboratory scientific officers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received 12 letters during the past three months concerning the pay and conditions of medical laboratory scientific officers. These are matters for the professional and technical staffs B Whitley council which, like other negotiating bodies, must have regard for what health authorities can afford within the resources available to them.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received concerning representation for medical laboratory scientific officers in his pay review body dealing with professions allied to medicine.

Mr. Whitney: Representations to this effect have been received from the Institute of Medical Laboratory Sciences, the professional body for medical laboratory scientific officers, and from time to time in letters which we have received. We have stated in reply that we are not prepared to extend further the scope of the pay review bodies. No such approach has been made by the trade unions representing this group of staff on the Whitley council.

Special Hardship Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Servies how many persons currently receive special hardship allowance; and what are the corresponding figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Newton: At 30 September 1983 (the latest date for which figures are available), 144,770 people were in receipt of special hardship allowance. The figures for the preceding five years are as follows:

	Number
1982	144,110
1981	146,030
1980	146,850
1979	148,020
1978	148,810

Hospices

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the hospices within the area covered by the four Thames regional health authorities and the number of patients each can accommodate.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. The hospice information service at St. Christopher's hospice, 51-59 Lawrie Park Road, Sydenham SE26 6DZ, maintains a list of the hospices of which it is aware.

Specialist Claims Control

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if specialist claims control officers are empowered to inquire into benefit payments to persons on supplementary pension, or persons on supplementary benefit who are disabled.

Mr. Major: Specialist claims control teams are empowered to investigate allegations of fraud in respect of all social security benefits.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish his latest assessment of the amount of fraud detected by specialist claims control, showing the basis on which this figure is calculated.

Mr. Major: The estimated benefit savings achieved by specialist claims control teams in 1984-85 was £6·9 million. The basis for this calculation is set out in the statement and copy report of a Departmental study placed in the Library on 12 June of last year.

Disabled People (Consultation Papers)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why copies of his consultation papers on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill were not sent to the Disablement Income Group, the National League for the Blind, and the Liverpool Association for the Disabled; and if he will now do so.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Cold-related Diseases (Deaths)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of people who died from cold-related diseases in England in each year since 1979.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the numbers of deaths with a mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, regardless of whether it did or did not appear as the underlying cause of death, for England from 1979 to 1985.

Deaths with mention of hypothermia, all ages, persons
Area of usual residence: England 1979-85

	Number
1979	789
1980	555
1981	628
1982	611
1983	508
1984	516
*1985	753

* provisional

Many causes of death are cold-related in that the number of deaths from them increases in winter; hypothermia is the only cause that can be directly identified as a cold-related disease from mortality statistics.

Dental Charges

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of treatment costs in the general dental services was accounted for by the provision of dentures in the years 1956, 1964, 1974 and 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: The proportion of the cost of the general dental service in England and Wales accounted for by the provision of dentures in the years requested is as follows:

	Per Cent
1956	29
1964	24
1974	18
1984	12

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the revenue from dental charges was accounted for by dentures in the years 1956, 1964, 1974 and 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his best estimate of the costs of allowing full exemption from dental charges for each of the following groups: *(a)* retirement pensioners, *(b)* recipients of invalidity pensions and *(c)* recipients of student grants.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information required to make reliable estimates for the specified groups is not available.

Dental Estimates

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the numbers of estimates scheduled by the Dental Estimates Board in November and December 1985, and the figures for the corresponding months in 1981 to 1984, inclusive.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table shows the number of estimates scheduled by the Dental Estimates Board for payment to dentists in England in the months requested. Operational difficulties at the board reduced the number of estimates scheduled in December 1985.

Year	November	December
1981	2,601,908	2,578,343
1982	2,594,894	2,617,435
1983	2,666,510	2,624,387
1984	2,660,369	2,753,665
1985	2,739,626	2,486,865

Benefits (Knowsley)

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons aged 16, 17 and 18 years, respectively, are presently claiming *(a)* supplementary and *(b)* other unemployment benefit in the borough of Knowsley.

Mr. Major: The table shows the number of people aged 16, 17 and 18 respectively claiming unemployment benefit in the borough of Knowsley at 9 January 1986—the latest figures available.

Number claiming unemployment benefit

Age	Number
16	246
17	898
18	1,150

I regret that similar information is not available for persons claiming supplementary benefit.

C Awards

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give guidance to those members of regional awards committees who act as chairmen of local committees responsible for nomination of doctors for C awards on the manner in which local committees are nominated and administered.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. Members of the independent regional awards committees are responsible for determining their own methods of working, including consultations with professional colleagues.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Wood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has received the report of the committee of inquiry into unnecessary dental treatment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Barney Hayhoe: I welcome the report of the committee of inquiry into unnecessary dental treatment in the general dental service chaired by Mr. S. G. Schanschieff JP which is published today by Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Copies are being placed in the Library.

The committee was established by the Government in December 1984. Its main finding on the extent of unnecessary treatment is that while none of the evidence is in itself conclusive it points to there being a small but significant and unacceptable amount of deliberate unnecessary treatment in the general dental service and a larger amount attributable to an out-of-date treatment philosophy. They are also particularly concerned that a significant amount of unnecessary orthodontic treatment may be undertaken.

They do not, however, believe the problem to be so widespread that patients in general should lose confidence in their dentists. They consider that the vast majority of dental practitioners in the general dental service provide a thoroughly professional service on which the general public can continue to rely.

Their 52 recommendations are aimed at improved monitoring of dental practice; stronger powers for the Dental Estimates Board and Family Practitioner Committees to deal with suspected overtreatment cases; clearer and more public criteria for giving or refusing approval for treatment where this is required in advance; the development of more realistic criteria for approving orthodontic treatment; more explicit warnings about overtreatment from the General Dental Council; more guidance to the profession generally on treatment standards; and guidance to patients on their own role and rights of choice as consumers.

The Government endorse the committee's general approach. There will now be consultation on the report with the dental profession and other interests affected. Subject to that, and to a full costing of the proposals, the Government intend to take action this year on the majority of the recommendations.

Advisory Board of Research Councils

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services who represents him on the Advisory Board of Research Councils; if his Department receives professional advice from outside in making representations to the advisory board; if his Department makes any proposals or suggestions regarding areas where research would be appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is represented by the chief scientist on the Advisory Board for the Research Councils which reports to the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

A wide range of professional advice both from within and outside the Department is available to the Chief Scientist across the field of his responsibilities, including his membership of ABRC. The ABRC broadly considers and explores with the research councils the balance of their research programme in advising the Secretary of State for Education and Science on the allocation of the science budget and the Department also makes suggestions about possible fields of research direct with the appropriate councils.

Westminster Local Office

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the present arrangements for claimants at the Regency street, Victoria, office of his Department.

Mr. Major: There has been some welcome improvement in the arrangements for social security claimants at the Westminster integrated local office in the past year. The arrangements for provision of benefit in the Central London area are currently under review, with the intention of making further improvements in the service to claimants.

Mr. Loyden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what complaints he has had from hon. and right hon. Members about the Regency street, Victoria, office of his Department.

Mr. Major: In the past year we have received seven letters of complaint from right hon. and hon. Members about Westminster local office. Two have been about the quality of service provided by the local office and five have concerned individual cases.

Heating Additions

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, how many claimants in Scotland, in each of the years *(a)* 1983, *(b)* 1984 and *(c)* 1985 were awarded (i) extra heating additions at (x) the lower rate and (y) the higher rate, (ii) central heating additions at (x) the lower rate and (y) the higher rate, (iii) age-related heating addition, (iv) disabled person's heating addition, (v) estate rate heating addition and (vi) any other heating addition.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *85*]: The information requested for 1983, the latest available year, is as follows:

Heating additions—Scotland

Thousands

	Number of recipients
Basic rate heating addition	64
Higher rate heating addition	48
Basic rate central heating addition	54
Higher rate central heating addition	26
Age related heating addition	44
Disabled person's heating addition	11
Estate rate heating addition	1
Others	2

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry 1983.

Mr. Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which housing estates in Scotland are currently designated as hard to heat for the purpose of supplementary benefit claimants receiving estate rate heating additions; what are the current criteria for designation; and how many households in Scotland are currently in receipt of estate rate heating additions.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *373*]: There are currently 174 certificates designating heating systems in Scotland as being disproportionately expensive to run under paragraph 6 of schedule 4 to the Supplementary Benefit (Requirements) Regulations 1983. Each certificate may cover the heating system or systems on one, part of, or more than one estate. I shall write to the hon. Member giving details of the estates concerned.

Estate rate heating additions are payable to supplementary benefit householders whose home is part of an estate with a heating system of which my right hon. Friend has in his discretion recognised the running costs to be disproportionately high. The factors taken into account in deciding whether or not to designate particular heating systems are set out in paragraphs 4293-4396 of the 'S' Manual of staff guidance, a copy of which is in the Library.

For information on the number of households in receipt of estate rate heating additions in Scotland, I refer the hon. Member to my other reply to him today.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the number of staff serving in social security offices each year since 1979; what has been the average work load each year in number of cases dealt with by each of them; how many staff each year undertook home visits; how many home visits they made; and how many welfare visits each member of the visiting staff made on average each year.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. *595-6*]: The only information available is as follows:

Year	*Local office complement*	*Average work load**		*Visits (including ineffective)*
		Supp. B	*STB†*	
1979-80	61,086	101	N/A	4,145,205
1980-81	62,115	103	N/A	4,352,026
1981-82	62,198	113	N/A	4,437,920
1982-83	62,758	127	N/A	4,168,382
1983-84	57,038	132	321	4,275,290
1984-85	59,032	129	320	3,658,564

Abbreviations: Supp. B — Supplementary Benefit; STB — Short Term Benefits; N/A—Not Available.

Notes:

* Number of cases in action divided by number of staff allocated to the work described.

† Short term benefits include sickness benefit, invalidity benefit, non-contributory invalidity pension and severe disablement allowance.

No records are kept on the number of staff undertaking home visits, and no separate records are kept on welfare visits, although all home visits have a welfare aspect.

TRANSPORT

Roads (Programme)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the current and capital expenditure on roads in the county of Gloucester for which his Department is responsible in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement on future projected expenditure in this regard.

Mr. Ridley: Details of current and capital expenditure on the trunk road network in Gloucestershire since 1979, for which the Department is responsible is as follows:

Year	*Current* £	*Capital* £
1979-80	1,000,000	1,000,000
1980-81	1,500,000	1,000,000
1981-82	1,500,000	5,250,000
1982-83	4,000,000	3,800,000
*1983-84	1,000,000	4,500,000
1984-85	1,500,000	5,500,000
1985-86	1,000,000	3,750,000

* Up to and including 1982-83, all maintenance was deemed to be current expenditure. From 1983-84, all major maintenance and structural normal maintenance has been classified as capital expenditure.

During this period two national improvement schemes were completed, costing approximately £15 million (Gloucester northern bypass £12 million, Northleach bypass £3 million).

For the future, I expect current and capital expenditure to remain at or about the present level for the remainder of the decade.

The national trunk road programme also contains schemes to the value of some £20 million and expenditure on trunk roads in the county will increase proportionately as these schemes come to fruition over the next five years.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what additional sources of funds are available for road improvement measures in the Bolton district council area in addition to transport supplementary grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A local highway authority may fund such measures from rate or precept income, from receipts from all sources, or from borrowing. Controls are exercised by the Secretary of State over capital expenditure and over borrowing. The assumed costs of financing capital expenditure (net of TSG) are taken into account in the calculation of an authority's block grant. Since Bolton is in an assisted area, road schemes which contribute to industrial development may be eligible for grant under section 13 of the Industrial Development Act 1982. Finance for suitable road schemes may also be available from the urban programme or the European regional development fund.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect on the scope and pace of the road programme of the change of emphasis within transport supplementary grant towards capital costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The first year of the new system of transport supplementary grant is still in progress. Councils' transport policies and programmes for 1986-87, submitted last year, show that they planned to start 100 major road schemes in 1985-86 compared with 68 in 1984-85. I expect the change of emphasis to help councils to achieve the levels of capital expenditure in the Government's public expenditure plans and to emphasise in their programmes schemes which ease congestion on through routes and which relieve communities of the nuisance of heavy traffic.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the proposed procedure for pursuing major highway schemes in the metropolitan council areas following abolition; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On 1 April the metropolitan district councils will become the highway authorities for all roads in their areas except for those for which my right hon. Friend is highway authority. It will be for them to pursue major schemes on their roads within the resources available to them. They have already either set out their proposals for 1986-87 in transport policies and programmes, or endorsed the TPP submitted by the appropriate metropolitan county council. On the basis of these TPPs my right hon. Friend announced in December councils' entitlement to transport supplementary grant for 1986-87 and made capital allocations. A similar procedure will apply for 1987-88.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he proposes to give any guidance to district councils about the use of private consultants on highway matters after the abolition of the metropolitan councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The use of consultants is an option district councils may wish to consider as an alternative to appointing extra staff. I do not consider it necessary to issue guidance. If any council wants advice on a specific matter, the Department is ready to help.

Roads (Circulars)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to issue a new circular as a follow-up to circular 1/85 on road safety and road improvement programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A circular will be issued in April giving guidance to highway authorities on the submission of transport policies and programmes for 1987-88.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what advice has been given to district councils about the measures set out in circular 1/85 on road safety and road improvement programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Circular 1/85 was addressed to district councils among others. It contains guidance on the preparation of transport policies and programmes for 1986-87 and explains the operation of transport supplementary grant. Further advice is available though informal contacts between officials and officers of highway authorities and the appropriate local authority Associations. The Department's regional offices will be pleased to advise councils on any particular questions they may wish to raise.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about alterations to the transport supplementary grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: When transport supplementary grant was under review in 1984 my right hon. Friend received various representations which he took into consideration when he decided to make changes to the system for 1985-86. Since then he has received no new representations of substance.

A30 (New Route)

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he will announce the route of the new road between Sourton Cross and Launceston on the A30.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The preferred route following public consultation was announced in July 1982. The recent parliamentary decision about the adjacent Okehampton bypass has enabled work to resume on preparation of this scheme with a view to publication of proposals in 1987.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has decided whether the new road between Sourton Cross and Launceston will be dual carriageway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our intention is that the road will be a dual carriageway.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the new road between Sourton Cross and Launceston will be completed.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We expect work to start in the period April 1989 onwards with completion about two years later.

Chemicals (Conveyance)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if benzothiazuron has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles;

(2) if benzyl alcohol has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These substances are not regarded as dangerous in transport and vehicles carrying them are not required to display hazard warning panels.

Benzothiazuron is a solid herbicide. Benzyl alcohol is a chemical solvent liquid used in the paint industry.

These substances are regarded as "harmful" for the purpose of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984 and packages must be marked with a number of appropriate risk and safety phrases. Both substances fall below the toxicity level for transport purposes which is less stringent than that for supply and use.

Hazard warning panels are only required for carriage by road in tank vehicles or large tank containers, but these substances do not fall within the classification criteria for the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if resorcinol diglycidyl ether has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: This substance is regarded as toxic in transport and packages must be appropriately marked, but vehicles carrying it are not requried to display hazard warning panels.

This is an industrial chemical used in the manufacture of expoxy resins and rubber and adhesive products.

It is regarded as "toxic" for the purposes of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984 and packages must be marked with a number of appropriate risk and safety phrases.

This product is recognised internationally as "toxic" in transport but no additional labelling is required.

Hazard warning panels are required only for carriage by road in tank vehicles or large tank containers. This product has a melting point of 32-33C and is therefore right on the borderline between a solid and a liquid. It could be carried as a liquid in a tank, but it would be difficult to keep such a large quantity heated and such circumstances are thought to be unlikely.

National Bus Company

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list in the *Official Report* the numbers of buses, repair and maintenance works, and depots, within each of the divisions of the National Bus Company, that have so far been designated for separate sale.

Mr. Ridley: The Government's policy is that the National Bus Company's 65 or so local subsidiaries should be sold individually as going concerns. As part of that process NBC will make available the necessary information for would-be purchasers to those concerned.

M25 (Accident Statistics)

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to determine the location of fatalities and serious accidents on the M25; and what access his officials have to police records concerning deaths on the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There were 36 fatal and serious accidents on the M25 in 1984, of which 10 were in Kent, 19 in Surrey, two in Hertfordshire, and five in Essex.

Detailed locations are recorded on the Department's computer database, though errors in the Ordnance Survey grid-references sometimes occur. The only true record is in the original police reports. The Department's agent authorities, the county councils, are employed to investigate accidents on motorways and trunk roads and can ascertain the locations in discussion with the police. Neither they nor the Department have apparently had access to police records.

I do not regard the present arrangements as satisfactory, and will be looking to make improvements.

Highland Express Airline Ltd.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport when a decision is expected on the application of the Highland Express Airline Ltd. to fly international trans-Atlantic flights from Prestwick; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Highland Express Airways Ltd.'s application to the Civil Aviation Authority for a scheduled service licence to carry passengers, cargo and mail on the Prestwick-New York (Newark) and Prestwick-Toronto sectors was granted on 6 February with effect from the date on which Highland Express completes financial arrangements which are acceptable to the authority. The authority will review its decision should these arrangements not be completed within the timescale envisaged. Appeals against the authority's decision must be made within 21 days of 11 February 1986.

Rochester Way Relief Road

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects completion of the Rochester way relief road stretch of the A2.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand the planned completion is 1988.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives for road improvement schemes by district councils are being encouraged by his Department following the abolition of the Greater Manchester council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department gave each metropolitan district the opportunity to submit its own transport policies and programmes for the next financial year and will shortly be inviting them to make a similar submission for 1987-88 following the abolition of the metropolitan districts.

Maritime Services

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the present arrangements for running Trinity House and the Northern Lighthouse Board.

Mr. Ridley: I shall answer this question shortly.

DEFENCE

Crown Proceedings Act 1947

76. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about section 10 of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

Mr. Lee: The right hon. Gentleman will already be aware of representations that have been made in this House. In answer to an earlier question on 26 July 1985, at columns 876-77, I said that in carrying out our review of section 10, account had also been taken of views that had been expressed by former members of the armed forces, the families of current and former members, members of the public and Members of Parliament. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has arranged to receive further representation from the right hon. Gentleman and other Members this afternoon.

Ascension Island

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by country and class the number of visiting warships to the British base on Ascension Island in the last five years.

Mr. Stanley: Full records of visits by warships to Ascension Island are not generally retained. However, in the time available, the following information can be provided about visits by warships other than those of the Royal Navy:

Ascension Island

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
United States					
Submarines	—	—	—	—	—
Brazil					
Corvettes	—	—	1	2	2

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the facilities the British base in the Ascension Island provides for visiting warships.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. *559*]: A limited range of facilities can be provided, where appropriate, to warships visiting Ascension Island, including a mooring; fuel; the loading of small quantities of stores; and some recreational and medical facilities.

Ammunition (Overseas Suppliers)

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the tender procedure for the purchase of 7·62 mm and 9 mm bullets will be open to overseas suppliers.

Mr. Lee: I would expect that some of our future purchases of small arms ammunition will continue to be from overseas suppliers, subject as always to considerations of national interest and economic procurement.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will list the quantity, value, and name of overseas suppliers for 7·62 mm and 9 mm bullets purchased in the years 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85 by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lee: MOD purchases from overseas suppliers were as follows:

Year and Supplier		*Type*	*Quantity (000)*
1981-82	Dynamit Nobel	9 mm Blank	150
1982-83	Dynamit Nobel	9 mm Blank	350
1983-84	Dynamit Nobel	9 mm Ball	10,500
1984-85	Dynamit Nobel	9 mm Blank	250
	Raufoss	7·62 mm Tracer	1,800
	Dynamit Nobel	9 mm Ball	5,000
	Metallwerk Elisenhutte	7·62 mm Blank	5,100
	Raufoss	7·62 Ball	10,000
	Raufoss	7·62 Tracer	3,000

The value of these contracts is commercially confidential.

Brigade of Guards and Household Cavalry

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many applications to join the Brigade of Guards or the Household Cavalry have been received since 1979; how many of these were from ethnic minorities; and how many of the latter were recruited.

Mr. Lee: The information requested is not held.

United States Aircraft

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has anything to add to his answer to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish on 15 November, *Official Report*, column *309*, about United States B-52 aircraft operating in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: The United States authorities have confirmed that the position remains as stated in my reply to the hon. Member on 15 November.

Lance Missiles

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions have taken place with representatives of Saceur concerning the replacement of the Lance missiles assigned initally to the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) on 11 February, at column 441.

Syrian Jet (Grounding)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any assistance was given by RAF traffic controllers or plotting staff to the Israeli authorities in connection with grounding of a Syrian executive jet on 4 February.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Light Planes and Gliders

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received on the prohibition by the United States Air Force of the use by light planes and gliders of the air space between Oxford and Banbury.

Mr. Lee: The United States Air Force has not prohibited the use of airspace between Oxford and Banbury, nor does it possess the authority to do so. The National Air Traffic Services, which is responsible for the safe and expeditious use of United Kingdom airspace, has, in close consultation with all interested airspace users, recommended the trial of a mandatory radio area around RAF Upper Heyford. Access to this airspace would be available to any private aircraft which first made radio contact with RAF Upper Hayford. Separate arrangements have been agreed for locally based aircraft not equipped with radio.

Representations on the trial have been received from a number of people and organisations all eminating from one source, the British Gliding Association.

Nuclear Tests

Sir Anthony Buck asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the outcome of recent discussions between the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and Senator Evans, Australian Minister for Resources and Energy relating to the report of the Australian Royal Commission on nuclear tests.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The first round of my discussions with Senator Evans was held in an amicable and constructive atmosphere. I am pleased to announce that, as a result of these discussions, the United Kingdom Government have agreed to provide United Kingdom experts to participate in the technical assessment group which the Australian Government have decided to form. I have also agreed that there should be a United Kingdom representative on the consultative group which the Australian Government plan to establish. The letter of invitation from Senator Evans and my reply, together with the group's terms of reference, follow. I understand that Senator Evans made a similar announcement in the Australian Senate on Wednesday 19 February.

Text of letter to Mr. Lamont from Senator Evans

Dear Mr. Lamont

As we agreed at our meeting in London on 22 January, the Australian Government is establishing a technical assessment group to advise on clean-up options for the former atomic test sites, particularly Maralinga. I invite representatives of the United Kingdom Government to participate in the group. Participation would be on a "without prejudice" basis to the question of ultimate liability for clean-up costs.

We agree that the technical assessment group would undertake field studies and laboratory research and report in detail on options and costs for the radioactive and toxic decontamination of the sites. As a result of these scientific evaluations, "practicable" solutions—in cost/benefit terms—can be established in order to achieve varying possible degrees of access to and habitation of the contaminated sites.

Regarding the final terms of reference for the group we agreed that suggestions from the United Kingdom would be communicated to Australia for consideration through your high commission in Canberra. I am anxious to settle the terms of reference as soon as possible so that the group can produce its interim report in May.

The composition of the group will be Mr. D. R. Davy, Chief of the Environmental Science Division of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission (Convenor) and Dr. K. H. Lokan, Director of the Australian Radiation Laboratory, a United States plutonium decontamination expert, Mr. B. W. Church, Director of the Health Physics Division, Nevada Operations Office, Department of Energy and two United Kingdom representatives. As discussed, while continuity is desirable it is not essential, and ad hoc co-option of United Kingdom representatives is a possibility. I envisage the first meeting being held in February-March.

I propose also to establish the consultative group we agreed on, as soon as possible and am pleased that the United Kingdom Government has agreed to be represented on this body. The other representatives will be from the Australian, South Australian and Western Australian Governments and Aboriginal interests. It will discuss and monitor progress on the rehabilitation of the test sites and maintain communication on all the various matters raised in the royal commission report.

I thank you for your co-operation in this sensitive and important matter and look forward to receiving the names of your representatives on the technical assessment group and the consultative group in the near future.

Text of letter from Mr. Norman Lamont MP to Senator Evans

Dear Senator Evans,

I am pleased that we were able to reach agreement at our meeting in London on 22nd January and that your arrangements for establishing the Technical Assessment Group are moving ahead swiftly. Thank you for your letter and the formal invitation.

I am pleased to accept the invitation to send representatives, on the understanding that it is in accordance with the assurance which the United Kingdom reiterated in 1978 to provide technical advice if requested on any further on-site operations to reduce surface contamination. I also acknowledge your agreement that the United Kingdom's representation on the Technical Assessment Group will be on a "without prejudice" basis to the question of ultimate liability for clean-up costs.

I am content with the Terms of Reference of the Technical Assessment Group which were handed to the British High Commission on 4th February 1986. However, I would wish to emphasise, as we agreed in London, that the function of the Group is to identify and assess the costs of a range of options, not to recommend which should be selected. Also, I am advised that the range of options relating to the burial pits at Maralinga shall not exclude improving their present condition and the possibility of local disposal of radioactive or toxic debris.

The names of the two experts for the Technical Assessment Group are:

Dr. Hylton Smith,
Head of Biology Department,
National Radiological Protection Board;

Mr. David Deverell (Rtd),
Formerly Head of Chemical Technology Division,
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment,
Aldermaston.

We will do our best to provide continuity of representation, but I am grateful for your recognition that other United Kingdom experts may be co-opted on an ad hoc basis.

As regards the Consultative Group, I confirm acceptance in principle of the invitation to be represented. The United Kingdom representative will be a member of the British High Commission in Canberra.

With your agreement, I would intend to publish this exchange of letters in Hansard; you may well wish to do likewise.

TECHNICAL ASSESSMENT GROUP

Terms of Reference

1. Advise the Minister for Resources and Energy on options for the rehabilitation of the sites used for the British nuclear testing programmes in Australia. In particular the Group shall:

(a) Advise the Minister on requirements, including resources, timescales and costs, for field studies, laboratory research and pilot operations to be undertaken to enable options for radioactive and toxic decontamination of former British atomic test sites in Australia to be developed.

(b) Evaluate, on the basis of a pilot study to be conducted by April 1986, the methodology, cost, scope, timescale and efficacy of scavenging of areas containing plutonium contaminated fragments (an emu parade) and to consider at the same time whether other debris at any of the test sites might be the subject of similar action.

(c) The Group to report to the Minister for Resources and Energy on *(a)* and *(b)* above by the end of May 1986.

(d) On the basis of the above field studies, laboratory research and pilot operations, and an assessment of hazards to operators, develop criteria, strategies and costs of options for decontamination of the test sites.

2. In considering options for the clean-up of the sites, possible access should cover the range from:

(a) fully unrestricted habitation by Aboriginals including the case of high dependence on local plants and animals for food: to

(b) casual access by Aboriginals assuming retained or, if necessary, extended fence.

3. The Technical Assessment Group will reconvene as necessary to assess progress of the field studies and research programme and report to the Minister as soon as possible on criteria, timescales and costs of decontamination options. The Group may report progressively once it has reached a final assessment of particular sites and in any case not later than six months after the completion of relevant field studies and research.

NATO

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will state the posts, ranks and responsibilities of his officials who represent the United Kingdom on the North Atlantic Treaty organisation planning board for European inland surface transport; how often this committee meets; and where it meets.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c. *547*]: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport to him on 13 February, at column 553. My department's representatives are both colonels, one from the Ministry of Defence in London and the other from BAOR.

Hong Kong

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by country and class, the number of visiting warships to the British base in Hong Kong in the last five years.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. *559*]: Full records of visits by warships to Hong Kong are not generally retained. However, in the time available, the following information can be provided about visits by warships other than those of the Royal Navy:

Hong Kong

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
United States					
Aircraft Carriers	3	3	2	2	2
Cruisers	5	5	8	8	2
Amphibious Assault Ships	9	9	25	13	13
Submarines	4	4	5	8	8
Destroyers/Frigates	28	37	35	16	19
France					
Helicopter Carriers	1	—	—	—	1
Destroyers/Frigates	2	—	—	1	1
Canada					
Destroyers/Frigates	2	—	—	3	—
Australia					
Aircraft Carriers	1	—	—	—	—
Destroyers/Frigates	2	4	3	4	2
Submarines	1	—	—	—	1
India					
Submarines	1	—	—	1	1
New Zealand					
Frigates	1	—	—	—	—
Brunei					
Patrol Craft	—	2	—	—	—
Malaysia					
Frigates	—	—	—	1	—
Offshore Patrol Vessels	—	—	—	—	1

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide information about all facilities the British base in Hong Kong provides for visiting warships.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. *559*]: A wide range of facilities are provided, as appropriate, to warships visiting Hong Kong, including berths alongside at HMS Tamar; moorings; shore support facilities; engineering facilities; the arrangement of commercial docking and tugs; the provision of fuel, stores and water; and certain recreational and medical facilities.

Defence Arms Control Unit

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the funding of the Ministry of Defence defence arms control unit.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1986, c. *471*]: The defence arms control unit is entirely funded by the defence budget. The costs of this unit for the current financial year are estimated at £440,000.

United States Base (Cyprus)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide details of the United States forces contingent at the Akrotiri base in Cyprus, in particular *(a)* the number of personnel, *(b)* the number and type of aircraft they support, *(c)* the role of the contingent and *(d)* the agreement under which the United States contingent is stationed there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 February 1986, c. *558-59*]: There is a small USAF detachment and a single

U2R reconnaissance aircraft based at RAF Akrotiri. Since 1974, the detachment has carried out reconnaissance flights in support of middle east peacekeeping arrangements. They are conducted with the knowledge and agreement of all the Governments directly involved.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Food Standards

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce proposals for the control of flavours and flavouring agents in food; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: Discussions are under way in Brussels on a proposal for a council directive that would establish the framework for future controls within the Community over all types of flavourings used in food.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to implement any of the recommendations of the Food Standards Committee's second report on food labelling; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The recommendations of the Food Standards Committee's second report on food labelling were taken fully into account in drawing up the proposals for the Food Labelling Regulations 1980 and the Food Labelling Regulations 1984 which superseded them.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to implement any of the recommendations of the Food Standards Committee report on meat products, published in 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984 which come fully into force on 1 July 1986 take into account the recommendations of the 1980 Food Standards Committee report on meat products.

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to implement any of the recommendations of the Food Standards Committee's report on water in food; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The recommendations in the Food Standards Committee report on water in food relating to labelling and meat products were fully taken into account during preparation of the Food Labelling Regulations 1980 (now superseded by 1984 regulations) and the Meat Products and Spreadable Fish Products Regulations 1984. The recommendations relating to fish products are among the issues currently being examined by the Food Advisory Committee in its review of coated fish products.

Fish Products

Mr. Coombs asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any plans to introduce compositional standards for fish products, other than fish cakes; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The Food Advisory Committee is currently reviewing the need for controls on the composition and labelling of coated fish products. I shall await the committee's report before considering whether any further action is necessary.

European Community (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much butter, meat, wine and other consumer foods the European Community sold to the Soviet Union, and the rest of eastern Europe, respectively, during the last annual period for which figures are available; what were the comparable figures for each of the previous seven years, respectively; and what price the food and wine was sold at in the most recent annual period for which figures are available, expressed in ecu per tonne on the same basis as the answer given to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Terlezki) on 2 February 1984, *Official Report*, column *319*.

Mr. Jopling: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him on 21 October 1985, at column 1. Revised figures for 1984, and provisional data for the period January-October 1985, are shown in the table:

European Community exports of the main agricultural products to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe: 1984 and January-October 1985

	Volume of exports ('000 tonnes)				*Average unit value (ecu/tonne) of exports to the Soviet Union and eastern Europe*			
	1984		*Jan-Oct 1985**		*1984*		*Jan-Oct 1985**	
	USSR	*eastern Europe†*	*USSR*	*eastern Europe†*	*USSR*	*eastern Europe†*	*USSR*	*eastern Europe†*
Wheat	4,937	1,634	3,301	965	180	179	184	167
Barley	673	65	2,397	508	168	174	157	155
Wheat flour	187	..	..	..	244	—	—	—
Rice	..	8	..	9	—	422	—	418
Malt	79	..	108	0	261	—	231	—
Wholemilk powder	5	1	6	..	1,279	1,836	1,248	—
Skimmed milk powder	..	..	0	..	—	—	—	—
Condensed milk	..	..	..	..	—	—	—	—
Butter and butteroil	86	..	162	..	1,299	—	1,296	—
Beef and veal	75	57	13	8	1,335	948	732	1,104
Pigmeat	..	2	..	..	—	836	—	—
Poultrymeat	..	6	..	3	—	682	—	720
Sugar total (White sugar equivalent)‡	589	1	..	15	262	509	—	136
of which refined sugar	452	1	..	2	273	508	—	200
Wine	72	14	n/a	n/a	86	441	n/a	n/a

Source: Eurostat.
* Provisional.
† German Democratic Republic, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania.
‡ Including raw sugar, converted to white sugar: 1 tonne raw sugar=0·92 tonnes white sugar.
.. less than 500 tonnes.
n/a=not available.

Cereals

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what tonnage of cereals is stored at the European Economic Community intervention store at Tickhill; at what price per tonne; at what yearly cost; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what tonnage of cereals was stored at the European Economic Community intervention store at Thorne for each year since 1978; at what price per tonne; at what yearly cost; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what tonnage of cereals was stored at the European Economic Community intervention store at Kirk Sandall for each year since 1978; at what price per tonne; at what yearly cost; and if he will make a statement.

(4) what tonnage of cereals was stored at each European Economic Community intervention store at Doncaster for each year since 1978; at what price per tonne; at what yearly cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The following is the information for the years in which stocks have been held.

1 January	*Tonnes*	*Value at then current purchase price (£ per tonne)*
	TICKHILL	
1983		
Breadwheat	26,602	130·47
Barley	28,361	118·45
1984		
Breadwheat	578	133·95
Barley	16,565	122·14
1985		
Feedwheat	4,372	121·00
Barley	60,289	121·00
1986		
Feedwheat	65,330	118·96
	THORNE	
1986		
Feedwheat	4,164	118·96
	KIRK SANDALL	
1986		
Feedwheat	5,068	118·96

Storage costs at individual commercial stores are not given on grounds of commercial confidentiality, but the average annual cost is £10·22 per tonne.

Export Rebates

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total sum which has now been provided in the European Economic Community budget for 1986 for the payment of export rebates and other sums to enable food and wine to be exported to nations outside the EEC; and what was the actual amount spent on these activities in each of the past six years, respectively.

Mr. Jopling: 7,568 mecu have been provided in the Community budget for 1986 for refunds on food and wine exported to third countries. Community expenditure on these refunds in the past six years was:

	mecu
1980	5,452·3
1981	4,938·6
1982	4,764·2
1983	5,220·5
1984	6,203·6
1985	*6,587·8

* provisional

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Reform

Mr. Ian Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements the Government have made for the future management of the seaside and country homes presently owned by the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: We have decided to adopt an initiative prompted initially by the London Boroughs Association, supported by the Greater London council and the Association of London Authorities, that arrangements should be made for the GLC's seaside and country homes to be owned and managed by a housing association. They will not therefore transfer, as previously proposed, to district councils. Vacancies arising in these properties therefore would continue to be reserved exclusively for London's elderly.

We understand that two housing associations that specialise in the care of the elderly have expressed an interest in taking over these homes. But in case these arrangements are not finalised by 31 March 1986, we have asked the London Residuary Body to become temporary landlords until the transfer is completed.

Anyone occupying these properties on 1 April 1986 will continue to enjoy security of tenure to their homes and controlled rents. The financial basis of transfer will enable the housing association broadly to maintain GLC levels of rents and management and maintenance expenditure.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will direct the London Residuary Body on how it should identify that debt associated with the repayment of principal on former Greater London council mortgages; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if capital receipts from Greater London council mortgages will be distributed as cash to the London boroughs by the London Residuary Body after the Greater London council is abolished;

(2) whether, after the Greater London council is abolished, extra borrowing approval will be distributed to the London boroughs in association with the distribution by the London Residuary Body of housing capital receipts from Greater London council mortgages.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) on 11 February at columns *396* and *397*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the treatment of capital receipts from Greater London council mortgages, he will make it his policy to seek to ensure that there is no net loss of housing investment resources to local authorities in London as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: This is already my right hon. Friend's policy.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if there will be any net loss of borrowing power to local authorities in London as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: The amount of borrowing which local authorities are permitted to undertake is linked to the amount of their capital allocations and of their expected revenues. It will therefore vary from year to year and no direct comparison can be made.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what direction he proposes to give to the London Residuary Body about the timing of its notification to each London borough as to the amount it can expect to receive in housing capital receipts under section 77 of the Local Government Act 1985 in respect of the financial year 1986-87.

Sir George Young: An order under section 77 of the Local Government Act 1985 will be laid before the House in due course.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what liabilities the London borough of Hillingdon will inherit as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council in relation to transferred Greater London council housing in its area, as opposed to housing associations in its area; what proportion the liabilities on transferred housing stock in Hillingdon represent of the total outstanding repair bill on transferred Greater London council housing in London; and what proportion Hillingdon will receive of the Housing capital receipts to be distributed to the London boroughs by the London Residuary Body as a result of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Sir George Young: According to the GLC, £146,000; the proportion of the liabilities as estimated by the GLC is 0·01 per cent. Hillingdon will receive 1·4 per cent. of the capital receipts and they will be able to use this to fund housing associations formerly funded by the GLC, or f. other housing needs in the borough.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the reply of 31 January, *Official Report*, column *652-3*, the gross provision for housing capital expenditure by local authorities in England for 1986-87 and his estimate of the aggregate spending power available to local authorities in 1986-87 includes provision or spending power relating to receipts accumulated and unspent by the Greater London council or to the non-prescribed proportion of receipts which have accrued to the Greater London council or which will accrue to the London Residuary Body; and if the method of construction of his estimate of such spending power depends in part on information previously provided by individual local authorities on their capital receipts.

Sir George Young: The gross provision for housing capital expenditure by local authorities represents the level of expenditure planned nationally, and is not related to the accumulated capital receipts of individual local authorities.

Assumptions about the spending power available at the national level from accumulated receipts have been based partly on information provided by individual authorities and partly on national estimates. Detailed information is now being sought from all local authorities about their accumulated receipts. Because such information has not hitherto been available, it has not been possible for any Department to make reliable estimates of the spending power available to individual local authorities from that source.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for Government policies for which he is responsible of the proposals in the document, "A Note on the Employment Implications of the Abolition of the County Council", published by the Merseyside Churches Unemployment Committee, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Merseyside Churches Unemployment Committee report calls for action to retain the economic and employment initiatives funded by Merseyside county council after its abolition. Government have provided the means and mechanism to enable the successor authorities (the district councils) to take over such projects, but it is for them to decide either jointly or singly their own priorities, though it is a matter of regret that the district councils on Merseyside have so far failed to come to any co-ordinated view.

The promotion of economic and employment initiatives is an important local authority function. Many initiatives have been supported by my Department through the partnership and urban programmes in recent years. There is no reason why this should not continue.

Nuclear Dumping Sites

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list his responsibilities in relation to the list of possible nuclear dump sites submitted to him by NIREX on 8 January; whether he intends to submit that list as it stood on 8 January to Parliament or to make changes to it; and whether he will initiate a process of consultation and reconsideration so that relevant factors such as development problems, population, transport and the views of local communities are taken into account before geological exploration begins;

(2) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on Tuesday 11 February, *Official Report*, column *403*, if he will set out the process of consideration to be given to the list of proposed nuclear dumps sites and state in what ways this process has changed from his previously announced plans.

(3) at what stage in the process of planning nuclear dumps the effect on local industries and local development needs will be taken into account;

(4) at what stage in the process of planning nuclear dumps considerations of planning blight will be taken into account;

(5) at what stage in the process of planning nuclear dumps population factors will be taken into consideration;

(6) at what stage in the process of planning nuclear dumps transport considerations will be taken into account;

(7) whether, in his consideration of possible sites for nuclear dumps, he will consider sites not already owned by Government Departments or NIREX partners; and at what stage in the planning process such sites are to be evaluated against owned sites;

(8) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *403*, whether he intends to make any changes, additions or deletions to the list of possible sites for nuclear dumps submitted to him by the chairman of NIREX on 8 January;

(9) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *403*, whether he will now consider additions to and deletions from the list of possible sites for nuclear dumps submitted to him by NIREX on 8 January; what factors he will take into account in such consideration; what opportunities will be given to local authorities in the process; and if he will make a statement;

(10) further to his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *403*, whether he will now consider suggested lists for possible nuclear sites from other private and public organisations besides NIREX; why NIREX is considered competent to take account of planning, population, transport, water supply and development needs of the ones concerned; how its relationship with other partners is evaluated when consideration is given to sites owned by those partners; and if he will make a statement;

(11) further to his reply of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *403*, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, whether having considered the NIREX lists he will now initiate an official inquiry to draw up a list of possible sites for geological exploration, taking into account the relevant factors, including land development needs and public opinion.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX, before it put forward its proposals on 8 January, considered a wide range of sites in public and private ownership and took into account questions of safety, planning and technical feasibility.

My right hon. Friend, who is responsible, together with my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and for Wales, for policy on the management of civil radioactive waste, has been looking at these proposals to ensure that they were the most appropriate way of carrying forward declared national policy.

My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement about possible sites for investigation next week. This will be accompanied by the publication of a draft of the special development order to be put to Parliament for approval, to give NIREX the planning permission it needs to investigate geologically the sites proposed. It will be open to local authorities and anyone else with an interest to comment upon what is proposed.

Detailed geological information will be an important input to any subsequent decision by NIREX to make a planning application in respect to a particular site. In doing so, it will have to prepare a detailed environmental assessment of the impact of the facility on the areas concerned, including the effect on local development. This will be considered at the public inquiry the Government has already said will be held into any proposals from NIREX for development.

Nuclear Dumping Sites

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will allow geological exploration of possible sites for nuclear dumps in counties whose structure plans prohibit disposal or transportation of nuclear waste; if he will list his powers to overrule such prohibition; on what basis he will consider doing so; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Permission to undertake geological exploration would be sought from Parliament through a special development order. My right hon. Friend's powers to approve, reject or modify structure plans, or proposals for their alteration or replacement, in whole or in part, are contained in sections 9 and 10 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971, as amended by the Town and Country Planning (Amendment) Act 1972 and the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. There are no policies in approved structure plans which prohibit the disposal or transport of nuclear waste.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 11 February *Official Report*, column *403*, whether he has received any representations on the list of possible sites for nuclear dumps from hon. Members representing constituencies in Oxfordshire;

(2) further to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby on 11 February, *Official Report*, column *403*, whether he will specify what representations he has received and from whom on the NIREX list of possible nuclear sites submitted to him on 8 January.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proposals put forward by NIREX are of course confidential. In recent months my right hon. Friend received a number of representations, from hon. Members and others, on the possible location of sites selected by NIREX. Representations have been made by hon. Members for constituencies in Oxfordshire.

Asbestos

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants are available to local authorities which find themselves with *(a)* council housing and *(b)* other council property, containing dangerous amounts of asbestos.

Sir George Young: Funds are not made available specifically for the removal of asbestos from local authority buildings, but rate support grant is paid in support of authorities' revenue expenditure generally, including expenditure on asbestos. When council housing is involved, expenditure that has been considered by Department under the project control system would be eligible for Exchequer subsidy.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what Government financial help is available to local authorities faced with the problem of asbestos in post-war prefabricated buildings; what advice

he is giving to local authorities faced with this problem; whether removal or recovering are recommended; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Financial assistance is not available specifically for work on asbestos in local authority buildings, but such work is one of the factors which can be taken into account in consideration of local authority finance generally. A guidance note on asbestos materials in buildings was published by the Department of the Environment in August 1983 and copies were sent to all local authorities in England and Wales. It is at present being updated and will be republished later this year.

The Department advises that asbestos material which is damaged or releasing dust should be removed, but asbestos materials in good condition can be left in place and sealed or enclosed.

Merseyside County Council

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will visit Liverpool to discuss with interested parties the consequences of the abolition of the Merseyside county council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 14 February to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) at column *590*. There are no plans at present for any further ministerial visits to Liverpool to discuss abolition matters.

Berkeley Power Station

Mr. Marland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he remains satisfied with monitoring of emissions from Berkeley power station and that they remain safe.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. I am satisfied that existing monitoring programmes cover all aspects of radioactive emissions from the station and their impact on the environment. The results of the monitoring show that there is no danger whatsoever to the general public as a result of radioactive emissions from the station.

Dog Licences

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to introduce legislation to permit local authorities to introduce their own dog licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Future arrangements for dog licensing remain under constant consideration following consultation on possible changes to the present system. We shall announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

News International (Planning Permission)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *35*, he will place in the Library the information available to the London Docklands Development Corporation on the terms of the planning permission granted to News International prior to the existence of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir George Young: The information is being obtained from the London borough of Tower Hamlets. As soon as it is available I shall arrange for it to be placed in the Library.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he proposes to increase resources to the National Heritage Memorial Fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baker: The Government accept that a number of important demands will be made on the reserves of the National Heritage Memorial Fund in 1985-86 and 1986-87 to prevent the export of works of art or the loss of land and buildings which form part of the national heritage. I propose to increase the resources available to the fund by £10·5 million in the current financial year. This sum has been financed from receipts and adjustments within my Department's programmes and there will be no overall increase in public expenditure. Added to the grant of £3 million which my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Arts and I plan to give the NHMF on 1 April 1986, these extra resources will ensure that the fund can continue its important work.

Abbey Park Estate

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on Calderdale council's submission to his urban housing renewal unit in respect of the Abbey park estate; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce today my right hon. Friend's favourable response to proposals for the Abbey park estate which Calderdale council has prepared in conjunction with my Department's urban housing renewal unit. The council has developed a comprehensive range of measures to tackle the problems of this run-down estate of some 700 dwellings. I am confident that the proposals will offer a new future to the residents of the estate and significantly enhance the quality of life on it.

The measures proposed include:

i. the setting up of responsive, locally based management arrangements on the estate as part of the Department's priority estates project. A fully staffed and accessible office has now been opened on the estate and it will provide a comprehensive housing service to the residents.

ii. a renovation programme to modernise and repair approximately 450 rented houses and flats on the estate. For this purpose I have agreed in principle to an additional capital allocation of up to £689,000 in 1986-7 to the council's housing investment programme.

iii. A community refurbishment scheme under which some 120 locally unemployed people will work on the improvement of the environment of the estate and the approaches to the houses and flats. This scheme will be funded by the Government's community programme, subject to the agreement of the Manpower Services Commission's area board, and my Department's urban programme. Resources of the order of £1·65 million will be involved, including up to £742,000 of urban programme funding, which I am pleased to approve in principle.

iv. Proposals are in hand to dispose of some 250 empty dwellings on the estate to the private sector for refurbishment and onward sale to private purchasers including council tenants, waiting list applicants and others. Tenders are currently being assessed. The involvement of the private sector will provide a valuable opportunity for the diversification of tenure on the estate.

I welcome the fact the Calderdale council has involved tenants closely in the development of this valuable package of measures and I am sure that it will continue to do so as the proposals are implemented. The Abbey park initiative is an exciting and pioneering partnership between Calderdale council, private enterprise and central Government. It has involved close collaboration between members and officials of the council, my Department's Yorkshire and Humberside regional office and the staff and consultants of the urban housing renewal unit. I hope that we shall see many more such schemes.

SCOTLAND

Foundry Closures (Falkirk)

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will list the number of foundry closures in Falkirk district since May 1979 and the companies involved, and the number of job losses in Falkirk district in the foundry industry; and what discussions his Department has had on these matters over the same period.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Comprehensive estimates of the number of closures and the number of job losses in the foundry industry in Falkirk district are not available. Officials of the Industry Department for Scotland are continuously discussing opportunities and problems facing companies both in the hon. Member's constituency and elsewhere in Scotland.

Community Charges

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the community charge that would have to be paid by each adult aged over 18 years in each district council area in the year 1985-86, assuming that the same revenue was to be raised as was produced by the district rate, regional rate and water rate paid by the domestic ratepayer in each of these areas in that year, and that gross rates are paid by all householders and taking rebates under the housing benefit scheme into account, and assuming that domestic householders *(a)* will or *(b)* will not continue to benefit from protection equivalent to the domestic element of 8p in the pound.

Mr. Rifkind: The approximate hypothetical community charge per adult which it would have been necessary to levy in Scotland in 1985-86 to raise the same amount as total rates, including water rates, from domestic properties is set out in the table. This assumes that gross rates are paid by all householders. Figures taking rebates under the housing benefit scheme into account are not available centrally. The figures allow for domestic rate relief of 8p. It is not possible to produce figures assuming no domestic rate relief without making assumptions about how the unused domestic element would be distributed through the grant system. It is the Government's intention that the balance between domestic and non domestic sectors should not be altered by the introduction of the new system.

	£
Berwick	156
Ettrick	157
Roxburgh	161
Tweeddale	153
Average for Borders	158
East Lothian	223
Edinburgh	229
Midlothian	228
West Lothian	213
Average for Lothian	225
Clackmannan	174
Falkirk	182
Stirling	204
Average for Central	187
Annandale	155
Nithsdale	157
Stewartry	156
Wigtown	149
Average for Dumfries and Galloway	155
Dunfermline	203
Kirkcaldy	216
North East Fife	211
Average for Fife	210
Aberdeen	174
Banff and Buchan	144
Gordon	144
Kincardine	142
Moray	141
Average for Grampian	157
Badenoch	162
Caithness	145
Inverness	157
Lochaber	161
Nairn	167
Ross and Cromarty	146
Skye and Lochalsh	150
Sutherland	148
Average for Highland	153
Argyll and Bute	208
Bearsden	223
Clydebank	226
Clydesdale	198
Cumbernauld	204
Cumnock	204
Cunninghame	221
Dumbarton	235
East Kilbride	201
Eastwood	221
Glasgow	245
Hamilton	234
Inverclyde	218
Kilmarnock	221
Kyle and Carrick	223
Monklands	215
Motherwell	217
Renfrew	237
Strathkelvin	219
Average for Strathclyde	229
Angus	175
Dundee	212
Perth and Kinross	182
Average for Tayside	194
Orkney	93
Shetland	97
Western Isles	103
Average for Scotland	207

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what he estimates would be the current cost of compiling a register for community charges purposes in Scotland as a whole and in each regional and island authority.

Mr. Rifkind: No precise estimate of the likely cost of compiling the proposed registers has been made. Extra costs are likely to arise from preparing, checking and maintaining the register and from the enforcement procedures, but these may be offset to some extent by savings resulting from the reduction in workload for assessors, and in appeals, on domestic valuation matters. I shall shortly be consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other interested parties on operational issues arising from the proposed introduction of a community charge system. This consultation will cover, among other subjects, the financial implications of the proposed changes.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he has of the number of electors in Scotland who have moved from their registration address by the end of the year during which the electoral register is valid; and if he will undertake a study of such movements using a variety of different electoral areas to assess the feasibility of maintaining an accurate annual community charges register.

Mr. Rifkind: Precise figures in the form requested are not available. I believe, however, that from the qualifying date when the register is compiled (10 October) until the register expires 16 months later (15 February) between 10 and 15 per cent. of electors in Scotland as a whole may move from their registration address.

I shall shortly be consulting local authorities and other interested parties on the operational issues involved in maintaining the register.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he can further define, and give examples of, the categories of properties in Scotland where the owner is likely to be liable for the payment of a collective community charge, as described in paragraph G33 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Rifkind: I intend that these arrangements should apply to a number of types of communal establishments, including hostels and lodging houses. I shall shortly be consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and other interested organisations on operational issues in connection with the proposed introduction of a community charge system; this consultation will cover the ways in which communal establishments generally will be treated under the new system.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what study he has made of the impact of the introduction of a community charge in Scotland on the civil courts; and what change in the number of debt actions to recover arrears he anticipates when the community charge is fully operational.

Mr. Rifkind: I intend that, as with rates arrears, summary warrant procedure should be used to recover arrears of community charge payment. The impact of the new system on the civil courts is therefore likely to be small. I shall shortly be consulting interested bodies on the detailed operational issues, including questions of the enforcement of payment, arising from the introduction of the proposed community charge system.

Household Statistics

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will set out the estimated increases in housing benefit cost and case load in Scotland resulting from the new local government finance system in the form set out in figure J9 on page 127 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(2) what was, at the latest convenient date, the Scottish average net household income as a percentage of the average figure for Great Britain;

(3) if he will set out the relationship of gross and net rates to net household income in Scotland in 1984-85 prices, in similar form to figure F1 on page 105 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(4) if he will set out the relationship between rateable value and income in Scotland, in 1984-85 prices, in similar form to figure F2 on page 105 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(5) if he will set out the percentage of households in each income range with rateable values in specified ranges in Scotland, in 1984-85 prices, in similar form to figure F3 on page 106 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(6) if he will set out the relationship of gross and net community charge to net household income in Scotland, in 1984-85 prices, in similar form to figure F4 on page 106 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(7) if he will set out the relationship of rates and community charge, both gross and net, to net household income in each band of equivalent net income in Scotland, in 1984-85 prices, in similar form to figure F5 on page 106 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(8) if he will set out the pattern of households in Scotland gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge by type of household in similar form to figure J7 on page 125 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714;

(9) if he will set out the distribution of tax units in Scotland gaining and losing with full replacement of domestic rates by the community charge by type of tax unit in similar form to figure J.8 on page 126 of the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Rifkind: According to the family expenditure survey, the average weekly household income (net of income tax and national insurance contributions) in Scotland in 1984 was 93 per cent. of the average for Great Britain.

The size of the Scottish sample for the survey, which is carried out each year, is about 600 households. Such a sample provides a reasonable measure of the average income of all households in Scotland. Even when data are analysed over a four-year period as explained in paragraph F3 of annex F of the Green Paper, the sample does not provide a statistically adequate source for tables relating to Scotland only and containing all the detail in figures F1, F2, F3, F4, F5, J7, J8 and J9 in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714). Apart from the income difference referred to above, comparisons between Scotland and England are complicated by the different range of services paid for by rates and by the different dates of valuation, but I have concluded that the Great Britain figures should be used as the best guide to the

patterns in Scotland. I am confident that the Government's conclusion that a community charge should replace domestic rates is amply justified.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households there are in Scotland with only one adult over the age of 18 years; how many of these are single parent families with children; and how many are single people over pensionable age.

Mr. Rifkind: Readily available information, which comes from the 1981 census of population, is not precisely in the form requested.

On 5 April 1981 there were 433,228 households in Scotland containing one person over 16 years of age, with or without others under 16. Of these households, 263,568 consisted of one person of pensionable age (with no children), and 40,455 contained one person over 16 and some under 16. The proportion of these 40,455 households in which the person over 16 was the parent of at least one of those under 16 is estimated (from a 10 per cent. sample) as 99 per cent.

Second Homes

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many second homes he estimates there are in Scotland at the latest convenient date; and how many of these are owned by people whose principal domicile is in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: It is estimated that there were some 17,300 second homes in Scotland in 1981. Of these, 11,300 (65 per cent.) had owners usually resident in Scotland.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends that an individual who owns a house in England, in which he normally lives, should have any house owned by him in Scotland treated as a second home, for the purposes of the payment of community charge to the local authority in whose area that house is situated.

Mr. Rifkind: The Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) proposes that under the new system second homes, whatever their ownership, should attract a standard charge and suggested that this should be equivalent to two individual community charges. I will shortly be consulting interested bodies on the detailed operational issues, including the question of the definition and treatment of second homes, arising from the introduction of the proposed community charge system.

Students (Community Charge)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give an estimate of the number of students in Scotland presently living away from home who would be liable to pay a community charge if the scheme outlined in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd. 9714) was in operation.

Mr. Rifkind: Precise information in the form requested is not available. In 1984-85 it is estimated that some 52,000 students in further and higher education in Scotland (not including students domiciled in Scotland who were not in receipt of an award from the Scottish Education Department) were living outside the parental home. Some of these, however, would be under the age of 18 and would not be liable for the community charge: the form of liability for community charge payment of others living in communal accommodation will shortly be the subject of consultation with interested bodies, along with other operational aspects of the proposed new system.

Electoral Register

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost in the latest convenient year of compiling the electoral register in each registration district in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind On the basis of budget information for 1985-86 provided by local authorities, current expenditure by each regional and islands authority on the registration of electors is as follows. Budget returns from two authorities do not distinguish between expenditure on registration of electors and expenditure on lands valuation, both being services provided by the regional or islands assessor.

Local authority current expenditure on Registration of Electors

Authorities	*Budget estimates 1985-86*
	£000
Borders	81
Central	142
Dumfries and Galloway	127
Fife	133
Grampian	169
Highland	180
Lothian	509
Strathclyde	640
Tayside	*1,021
Orkney	55
Shetland	41
Western Isles	*87

* Includes Lands Valuation.

Local Income Tax

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the range of local income tax rates that would apply in Scotland, assuming that average rate bills are converted into average local income tax rates.

Mr. Rifkind: Applying the same method used to produce the local income tax rates for England which are illustrated in paragraph 3.26 of "Paying for Local Government" (Cmnd 9714), present Scottish average domestic rate bills would convert into local income tax rates ranging from approximately 2½p to 6½p. The following assumptions about central Government grants to local authorities are used in this calculation:

(a) there is resource equalisation making the yield per adult of a 1p-in-the-pound local income tax the same in all areas;

(b) the present grant total is augmented by the present cost of rate rebates.

While very approximate illustrative figures such as the above can be derived, these totally ignore the practical difficulties associated with the assumptions, notably in calculating the tax base of each district for the purposes of equalisation.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if, pursuant to the reply of 12 February to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye, he will detail in the *Official Report* those cases where there has been reduced need for

payments of grant-in-aid to the Highlands and Islands Development Board as a result of the board *(a)* not spending its budgeted amounts approved by Parliament and *(b)* obtaining receipts which were not used for higher than budgeted spending; and if he will state the total sums involved in each case.

Mr. John MacKay: There have been three occasions since 1980 that the provision for the HIDB's grant-in-aid has not been fully utilised. These were:

	£ 000s		
	Budget	*Outturn*	*Shortfall*
1980-81	20,650	20,021	629
1981-82	23,597	22,942	655
1984-85	34,627	34,619	8

In the first two years, the shortfalls were due to the board's spending being less than the original budget. In 1984-85, receipts additional to the original estimate were obtained by the board and its budget was increased correspondingly. The very small shortfall was against the increased budget.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he has any plans to privatise the Forestry Commission; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on any review presently being considered to amend Her Majesty's Goverment's policy of land disposals by the Forestry Commission.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) on 8 November 1984 setting out the Government's policy on disposals by the Forestry Commission. As in all other areas of Government activity policy is kept under regular review.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had a report from the Forestry Commission recommending disposal of the Commission's assets to private investors.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no such recommendation from the Forestry Commission.

Scottish Development Agency

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what money budgeted for, or originally allocated to, the Scottish Development Agency budget is now being employed to fund regional selective assistance or regional development grant payments.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No money specifically allocated to the Scottish Development Agency has been employed in this way. As my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State explained in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on 11 November at column 68, the formerly announced increase of £6,845,000 in the cash limit for vote XV,3 (Regional and general industrial support Scotland), as a whole, was cancelled as a contribution towards the increase in provision for vote XV,5 (Regional Assistance, Scotland).

Legal Aid

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for *(a)* criminal legal aid and *(b)* civil legal aid have been made in Scotland in each of the last five years for which records are available; and what percentage of applications in each category were granted in each year.

Mr. Rifkind: Details for the year to 31 March 1985 are not yet available. The information for the five preceding years is as follows:

(a) Criminal legal aid

	Total applications received	*Percentage granted*
1979-80	43,077	86
1980-81	50,706	88
1981-82	58,392	90
1982-83	61,374	90
1983-84	68,402	90

(b) Civil legal aid

	Total applications received	*Full certificates issued*
1979-80	29,012	16,782
1980-81	32,843	17,621
1981-82	35,292	22,190
1982-83	31,006	19,475
1983-84	31,126	18,353

In the case of civil legal aid the figures are not given as a percentage since the applications include applications for emergency certificates, some applications are pending at the end of year, and not all approvals result in the issue of a certificate.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total cost of legal aid in *(a)* criminal and *(b)* civil cases in each of the last five years for which records are available; and what was the average cost per individual case in each category.

Mr. Rifkind: Details for the last year to 31 March 1985 are not yet available. The information for the five preceding years is as follows:

	Total cost £000	*Average cost per case* £
(a) Criminal legal aid		
1979-80	5,741	123
1980-81	8,549	166
1981-82	11,650	194
1982-83	16,834	241
1983-84	18,015	264
(b) Civil legal aid		
1979-80	3,954	298
1980-81	6,487	384
1981-82	8,788	471
1982-83	12,035	589
1983-84	13,445	615

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 21 February 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Hengistbury Head, Bournemouth (Coast Protection)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much grant aid under the Coast Protection Act 1949 has been agreed for the coast protection works at Hengistbury head, Bournemouth.

Mrs. Fenner: The works at Hengistbury head are very complex and are being carried out in a number of district phases. Work has begun on stage one but my officials are awaiting certain financial information from Bournemouth borough council before the grant for this phase can be calculated. The costs and other details of the remaining stages have not yet been fully ascertained and I am therefore unable to determine grant on these phases at the moment.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prison Building

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the progress of the prison building and improvement programmes at Eastchurch on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, indicating the likely total costs, the completion dates, and the planned increases in staffing levels.

Mr. Mellor: We are currently carrying out major capital work at the existing Standford hill prison at Eastchurch, and constructing a new prison, to be known as Swaleside, on an adjoining site.

At Standford hill, the main contract for two new living blocks to replace the existing category D accommodation is due to be completed at the end of this month, at an estimated final cost of about £4·85 million. The former category C accommodation at the establishment was closed last year as a result of fire damage, and we are currently undertaking a feasibility study in connection with its reprovision.

Construction of the new Swaleside prison began in January 1985, and is due to be completed towards the end of 1987. The latest estimated cost is £22·8 million.

There will be no increase in staffing levels at Standford hill following the commissioning of the new accommodation. At Swaleside approxiamtely 230 discipline grade staff and about 80 other (including governor grades and administration staff) will be employed.

Mr. Moate asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table describing the prison building programme of the Government since 1979 as compared with the years 1974 to 1979.

Mr. Mellor: The following table gives details of capital expenditure on new prisons and on modernisation and redevelopment of the existing prison estate, and of new inmate places provided both in new and existing prison establishments. Work at existing establishments, which (together with other schemes carried out by direct labour) is undertaken by the Home Office directorate of works, embraces not only the provision of new places but a wide range of other capital projects to provide new or improved facilities and services.

	1974-75 to 1978-79	*1979-80 to end of January 1986*
Home Office: Director of works		
Capital expenditure	£92·2 million	£223·6 million
New prison places provided	3,446	2,497
New prison	Glen Parva (part)	Throp Arch
	Gringley	Glen Parva (part)
	Cookham Wood	Holloway
		Feltham
		Lindholme
Department of the Environment: property services agency		
Capital expenditure	£29·9 million	*£98·9 million
New prison places provided	484	2,347
New prisons	Featherstone	Wymott
		Frankland
		Wayland
		Stocken
		Thorn Cross

* Includes one non-place producing scheme to provide staff facilities and ancillary accommodation at Birmingham Prison.

Firearms

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 24 January, *Official Report*, column *324*, of the firearms, annually reported as stolen since 1979, in each year to 1983, how many were *(a)* air weapons, *(b)* pistols or revolvers and *(c)* antique weapons.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information is given in the following table. Information on antique weapons stolen is not separately available and these weapons will have been classified according to the types shown.

Burglaries and thefts, recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been stolen, by type of weapon.
England and Wales *Number of offences*

Year	*Air weapons*	**Pistols*	*Shotgun*	*Rifle*	*†Other*	*Total*
1979	1,342	136	551	119	293	2,441
1980	1,378	155	608	109	317	2,567
1981	1,454	205	723	117	343	2,842
1982	1,271	189	716	111	338	2,625
1983	1,183	163	660	112	300	2,418
1984	1,202	164	678	103	392	2,539

* Includes revolvers.
† Includes starting guns, imitation guns.

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the firearms reported stolen in each category were recovered by the police in each year from 1979 to 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not recorded by chief officers of police.

Community Radio

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will specify in the *Official Report*

the full details of the monitoring of community radio during the two years' experimental period; and if he will make it his policy to arrange for daily tapes from each community radio station to be subject to detailed analysis.

Mr. Giles Shaw: As announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary on 25 July 1985 at columns 670-671, arrangements are being made for the community radio experiment to be monitored by way of independent research studies of such matters as the nature of services provided by selected stations, audience reaction and the impact on existing broadcasting services. It is our intention to publish the results of this research. The transmissions of all the stations in the experiment will in addition be liable to be monitored by the Home Office at any time, but it is not envisaged that there will be any need for a detailed analysis of the full output of each station.

Police (Compensation)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what compensation is paid to police officers injured in the course of duty; and what pensions are paid to those who are unable to continue work as a result of such injuries.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A police officer is entitled to full pay while absent from duty because of injury. If the injury was caused by criminal action, compensation may be claimed under the criminal injuries compensation scheme. An officer who has to retire prematurely as the result of injury on duty is entitled under the Police Pension Regulations 1973 to an ill health pension, an injury pension and an injury gratuity. The ill health pension is calculated by reference to his average pensionable pay at the time of his retirement and his years of service, the maximum pension so payable being two-thirds of pay. The injury pension provides a guaranteed minimum income, the level depending on the degree of disablement, up to a maximum of 85 per cent. of pensionable pay. Three quarters of the ill health pension is taken into account. The injury gratuity is a lump sum of up to six months' pay.

If the officer's injuries render him totally disabled he is also entitled in anticipation of the Police (Injury Benefit) Regulations which are about to be made to a lump sum of five times average pensionable pay subject to abatement in respect of any damages or other compensation received.

Immigration Service

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the staffing levels of the United Kingdom immigration service for each year since 1978.

Mr. Waddington: The number of staff in post in the immigration service on 1 January in each of the years since 1978 was:

	Number
1978	1,555
1979	1,587
1980	1,606
1981	1,668
1982	1,630
1983	1,695
1984	1,711
1985	1,777
1986	1,788

Visitors (Visas)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there exists any category of potential visitors who are automatically refused a visitor's visa.

Mr. Waddington: I refer the hon. Member to paragraphs 17-20 and 76 to 85 of the immigration rules (HC 169 as amended).

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Universities (Accounts)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will introduce legislation to ensure that the full accounts of universities are available for public scrutiny.

Mr. Chris Patten: University statutes generally require university accounts to be published or otherwise made available for inspection, and I understand that it is already general practice for them to be published.

Schools (Drug Awareness)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local education authorities have appointed a teacher to be responsible for drug awareness in their work; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: In a considerable number of local education authorities, schools, colleges or the authorities themselves have assigned functions in this area to teaching staff. As from 1 April this year, this work will receive considerable reinforcement from the appointment of advisers or other specialist staff funded by the Department through the education support grant.

School Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the number of pupils in each local education authority and in England educated in pre-1914, post-1914 and pre-1939, post-1939 and pre-1960, and post-1960 school buildings.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected by the Department.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each local education authority and for England, the number of classes and of pupils in classes in each local education authority with under 30, 31 to 35, 36 to 40, and over 40 pupils per class for primary and secondary schools for each of the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: I shall write to the hon. Member.

GCSE Examinations

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what action he has taken to ensure that sufficient preparations have been made for the new GCSE examinations with regard to teachers' courses; how many mode 1 syllabuses have been approved; and how he proposes to make them available by the autumn term.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Secondary Examinations Council, the GCSE examining groups and the local education authorities have all combined to provide a programme of preparation for the new examination courses which is unprecedented both in its scale and in its scope. The Department is making a substantial financial contribution. Mode 1 syllabuses in those subjects for which there are subject national criteria fall to be approved by the examining groups and the Secondary Examinations Council. Mode 1 syllabuses in other subjects fall to be approved by the examining groups in the first instance. The Secondary Examinations Council announced on 18 February that 76 syllabuses had been approved. All syllabuses must be approved by May 1986 at the latest. Both the examining groups and the Secondary Examinations Council are on course for that target. The distribution of approved syllabuses to schools is a matter for the examining groups.

CERN

Mr. John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce a decision on the future level of British participation in CERN.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 4 February 1986, c. *114*]: On 20 February at the invitation of the Council of CERN I attended an extraordinary session at which it was unanimously agreed, following the proposal made by the United Kingdom, and on the basis of a resolution put forward by the President of the Council, Professor Kummer, to conduct a comprehensive independent review of the organisation. The resolution and accompanying explanatory note are as follows:

"CERN REVIEW

THE CERN COUNCIL

Recognising

the growing importance, for all European states regardless of their size, of political, economic, scientific and technological collaboration;

the necessity of fundamental scientific reserch of high quality both for the advancement of knowledge, and for future economic and social prosperity;

the success of the scientific collaboration in CERN which has given Europe a leading position in the world in the field of particle physics;

the growth of scientific opportunity in this and other fields, and the consequence for priorities both nationally and internationally;

the need for governments to review from time to time the distribution of financial and human resources over the existing scientific activities so as to ensure responsiveness to new scientific and technological developments;

the duty, with limited publicly-provided resources, of seeking improved cost-effectiveness and better value for money.

Having regard to

the desirability of maintaining also in the longer term the high quality and international character of CERN science and technology, and a programme in which LEP experiments as well as other ones, including smaller experiments, can find a place;

possibilities within the existing CERN Convention for engaging and enlarging other sources of funds and resources;

the possibilities for improved worldwide co-ordination of investment plans for accelerators and of their use;

the possibilities for improving efficiency within CERN and the need to match staffing cost-effectively to programme requirements;

the importance of realising LEP phase 1 and taking into consideration the completion of LEP to its full design energy.

Decides to appoint an ad hoc consultative group of external personalities to conduct an in depth comprehensive review of CERN with the following task:

to advise the Council how human and material resources, employment conditions, structure, operations and future use and development of facilities might be developed to operate with maximum cost effectiveness and value for money at alternative levels of funding by present Member States, and to assess their consequences for the CERN programmes and for the services to Member States*;

to assess the possibilities for engaging and enlarging other sources of funds and resources;

to report within one year findings and recommendations to the CERN Council and hence to the governments of the Member States.

Asks the Director-General of CERN and his staff, and other organs and committees of CERN, to provide such information and other collaboration as the Review Group may request.

*The Delegation of the United Kingdom requests the consideration of alternative levels of funding by present Member States ranging from constant contributions at 1986 levels to contributions reduced by 25 per cent expressed throughout in 1986 real terms, over the next 5-7 years. [The President undertook to ensure that the review group examined this option.]

Cern Review: Explanatory note

1. The Group should be composed of five to seven persons and might include scientists engineers and industrialists. Members should be chosen for their breadth of experience. One member would be named as Chairman. Chairman and other members should be ready to devote the appropriate time for this task. Chairman and members would be appointed by the President of Council on behalf of the CERN Council, taking into account proposals made by the Governments of Member States, and after consultation with Committee of Council.

2. The group would have its own full-time secretariat attached to the Chairman of the Group.

3. It would be for the group to decide on its procedures. The group would be free to examine any possibilities it chose. The Group should take account of the Scientific Policy Committee and of the progress of other relevant reviews such as CERN's own internal review programme including that of Professor Rubbia's group.

4. It would be open to the Group to commission further professional help (e.g. management consultant services) with the approval of the President of CERN Council.

5. The cost of the review will be evaluated and the manner in which it will be financed will be decided on the basis of a proposal made by the Chairman of the group in collaboration with the President of Council and of the Director-General of CERN."

Schools (Capital Allocations)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Devon;

(2) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Devon for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Devon by way of capital allocation for education;

(3) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Cornwall;

(4) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Cornwall for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Cornwall by way of capital allocation for education;

(5) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Somerset;

(6) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Somerset for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Somerset by way of capital allocation for education;

(7) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Avon;

(8) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Avon for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Avon by way of capital allocation for education;

(9) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Dorset;

(10) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Dorset for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Dorset by way of capital allocation for education;

(11) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Wiltshire;

(12) what is the captial allocation for voluntary aided schools in Wiltshire for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Wiltshire by way of capital allocation for education;

(13) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Lancashire;

(14) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Lancashire for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Lancashire by way of capital allocation for education;

(15) what is the capital allocation for 1986-87 for wholly supported schools in the public sector in Lincolnshire;

(16) what is the capital allocation for voluntary aided schools in Lincolnshire for 1986-87, expressed *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total money made available in Lincolnshire by way of capital allocation for education.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 February 1986, c. *182*]: The information requested is set out in the following table:

Education capital expenditure allocations 1986-87

£000's

Local education authority	*Allocation of prescribed expenditure**	*Notional schools element†*	*Allocations‡ for expenditure by governors of aided and SA schools*	*Aided allocation as a percentage of all capital allocations‖*
				per cent
Avon	4,070	2,986	193	4·5
Cornwall	3,592	3,401	252	6·6
Devon	8,418	7,453	132	1·5
Dorset	3,377	2,352	216	6·0
Lancashire	12,538	9,851	1,302	9·4
Lincolnshire	3,908	3,523	3	0·1
Somerset	2,014	1,792	22	1·1
Wiltshire	1,983	1,981	29	1·4

* Allocations of prescribed expenditure are made under Section 72 of the Local Government Planning and land Act 1980 and are unhypothecated sums to cover all LEA capital expenditure.

† LEAs are notified of the notional elements for schools and further education capital expenditure underlying the allocations as an indication of how they were calculated. LEAs are free to apply their allocations as they wish.

‡ This expenditure is not prescribed expenditure and is assisted by grant from the Department. The allocations shown are those announced on 18 December 1985 and are subject to variation in the course of the 1986-87 financial year.

‖ There is considerable variation between these eight LEAs in the proportion of schools which are aided.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Turkey

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make a statement about progress on Turkish fabric manufacturers' recent commercial initiatives aimed at redressing the balance of textiles trades between Turkey and EEC countries; and what plans he has for developing these initiatives;

(2) what financial and other support he is giving to British manufacturers wishing to further commercial relations in Turkey.

Mr. Alan Clark: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Insurance Contracts

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what progress he has made in his review of the position on non-disclosure and breach of warranty in relation to insurance contracts.

Mr. Channon: The insurers have informed me that they are willing to strengthen the non-life and long-term statements of insurance practice on certain aspects proposed by the Department. These concern the limitation of the duty of disclosure, warranties, disputes procedures and, in the case of the long-term statements the payment of interest on life insurance claims. The statements apply to insurances taken out by private consumers. Copies of the texts of the revised statements have been placed in the Library.

These changes are in the right direction. I am well aware of the arguments, advanced amongst others by the

representatives of consumers, in favour of legislation on non-disclosure and breach of warranty. But I consider that on balance the case for legislation is out-weighed by the advantages of self-regulation so long as this is effective. I look to all insurers, whether or not they belong to the Association of British Insurers which has promulgated the statements, to observe both their spirit and their letter.

In the light of the insurers' undertakings I do no consider there is any need for the moment to proceed with earlier proposals for a change in the law. My Department will however keep the situation under review in order to ensure that self-regulation is working adequately and will reconsider the question of legislation if problems continue to arise.

Consumer Protection

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation extending to England and Wales provisions having similar effect in those applying to Scotland through section 49(3) of the Sale of Goods Act 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Section 49(3) of this Act simply preserves an existing right applying in Scotland. There is no similar right under general law in England and Wales and the Government have no plans to legislate to create one. It is of course always open to the seller in England and Wales to stipulate for the payment of interest in a contract with the buyer and I understand that, in commercial contracts, this is common practice.

Airbus

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to the proportion of the production of the British Aerospace industry represented by the Airbus A320; what information he has as to the proportional contribution of the industry to the manufacture of the Airbus A320; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1986, c. *268-9*]: As the A320 is still in the development stage and has yet to go into series production, it is too soon to be able to estimate what proportion of the production of the British aerospace industry it will represent.

On figures currently available the United Kingdom content of the total Airbus A320, including airframe, engines and equipment will be in the order of 16 per cent. for the CFM engined version and of 26 per cent. for the V2500 engined version.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has as to how many Airbus A320s have been firmly ordered, and by which airlines; how many options exist for this aircraft, and from which airlines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1986, c. *268-9*]: According to the latest information available to me the order position for the Airbus A320 is as follows:

	Firm orders	*Options*
Contracts signed		
Air France	25	25
Air Inter	10	14
British Caledonian	7	3
Cyprus Airways	4	4
Inex Adria	5	3
Pan American	16	34
Ansett Airlines	8	9
Lufthansa	15	25
GATX Air	10	—
	100	117
Memorandum of Understanding		
Indian Airlines	19	12
Trans Australian	9	—
	28	12

The number of A320 orders and options achieved two years ahead of the aircraft's entry into service is very encouraging.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Tax Investigations

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how Inland Revenue or Customs and Excise inspectors carry out in-depth investigations into the tax affairs of companies, businesses or schedule D taxpayers.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: An inspector will carry out an in-depth investigation into the accounts of a company or business only where he is not satisfied that the taxpayer has fully declared his profits. An inquiry into the business records and the underlying information from which they are constructed will normally involve correspondence and possibly interviews with the taxpayer, and with his agent if he has one. The inspector may use the statutory powers available to him in order to obtain further information, where this is considered necessary.

A VAT trader will be subjected to an in-depth investigation by Customs and Excise only where there is reason to suspect that deliberate tax evasion has taken place. Customs and Excise normally carry out control visits to all VAT registered traders using selective checking procedures.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies went into liquidation, businesses ceased trading and schedule D taxpayers were declared bankrupt following in-depth Inland Revenue or Customs and Excise investigations, stating what proportion that was of those companies, and so on assessed for further tax in each of the years since 1979.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: The Inland Revenue does not keep such records. This question could be answered in respect of VAT registered traders only at the cost of disproportionate time and effort.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many in-depth investigations into companies, businesses and schedule D taxpayers the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise have carried out where they have gone back up to 10 years for each of the years since 1979 to date; and how many such investigations revealed that further tax was payable, giving the total figures involved in each year.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: The table sets out, in respect of Inland Revenue investigations, figures for both over-10 years and under-10 years. Until 1982 records were kept to a year ending on 31 October, whereas from April 1983 they have been kept on a fiscal year basis. Consequently part of the October 1982 figures—for the period from 6 April to 31 October—are also included in the 1982-83 figures.

The yield for cases over and under 10 years is not available.

Year ended 31 October	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
In-depth investigations							
Schedule D	46,025	44,285	48,516	51,735	52,759	52,875	51,568
Companies	1,329	1,634	2,996	4,349	4,769	5,479	5,347
Total	47,353	45,919	51,512	56,084	57,528	58,336	56,915
Further tax payable—Cases	38,673	38,768	44,743	48,951	50,524	52,831	52,025
Percentage of Cases	82	85	87	87	88	91	91
Yield (£ million)	n/a	n/a	n/a	97·3	111·4	146·6	161·3
Cases where further tax payable going back up to 10 years	n/a	n/a	n/a	47,792	49,330	51,674	50,947
Cases where further tax payable going back 10 years and over	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,159	1,194	1,157	1,078
Percentage of cases going back 10 years and over				2·4	2·3	2·1	2·1

I regret that no statistics are available in relation to VAT.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies, businesses and schedule D taxpayers following an in depth investigation by the Customs and Excise or Inland Revenue were given the choice to pay a lesser sum over a period of time or contest the full sum before the Commissioners, giving the sums involved.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: A taxpayer may negotiate an agreed settlement with the inspector, or have his appeal determined by the commissioners. There is no choice of the type referred to the question of payment over a period of time normally arises only when, figures having been agreed, the taxpayer is unable to raise the funds to meet the liability and asks for an instalment arrangement.

There is no provision in VAT legislation for this facility to be offered to VAT registered businesses.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why, in in-depth investigations by the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, the onus is placed on the taxpayer to show that further tax is not payable.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: In relation to the Inland Revenue, it is provided by statute, in relation to taxes on income and profits generally and not only in connection with an in-depth investigation, that if an inspector is disatisfied with a return he may make an assessment based on his best judgment. The taxpayer may appeal against that assessment and, in the absence of agreement between the taxpayer and the inspector, the appeal will be heard by the special or general commissioners. The law further provides that the assessment shall stand, unless at an appeal hearing it appears to the majority of the commissioners present, by examination of the appellant or other lawful evidence, that the taxpayer is being overcharged.

Assessments for VAT are raised only where Customs and Excise are satified to thier best judgment that there is evidence that an underdeclaration of tax has occurred.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what administrative directions set out how the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise exercise their powers to carry out in-depth investigations into the tax affairs of companies, businesses and individuals paying tax under schedule D, after audited accounts have been submitted; and if he will state up to how far back such investigations normally go.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: The directions given to inspectors of taxes are set out in head office instructions, and further information is given in training courses and guidance notes.

The following table provides details of the number of years covered by Inland Revenue investigations during 1984-85:

Number of years included in settlement

	1	*2*	*3-4*	*5-6*	*7-8*	*9-10*	*>10*	
Income Tax	9,610	7,288	15,763	8,913	3,801	1,130	933	47,438
Corporation Tax	1,312	653	997	650	254	121	145	4,132
Total	10,922	7,941	16,760	9,563	4,055	1,251	1,078	51,570
Percentage of Total	21	15	32	19	8	2	2	100

In-depth investigation by Customs and Excise and the issue of additional assessments are not dependent on the prior submission of audited accounts which form only part of the basis of calculation of VAT liability.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of directors of companies or businesses or schedule D taxpayers who were assessed as liable to pay further tax after an in-depth investigation used professional legal or accountants' assistance in their dealings with the Inland Revenue at the time of agreeing to pay further tax.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *330-31*]: I regret that this information is not available.

WALES

Community Service Projects

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's support for community service projects in Wales; and whether he has any plans to extend or develop his Department's work in this area;

(2) if he will estimate how many people have been involved in community service schemes supported by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 20 February at column *266*.

Within available resources our Department will continue to provide support through a wide range of measures which enable people to serve the needs of the community.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of 1985 school leavers in each Welsh county are currently *(a)* unemployed, *(b)* engaged on YTS schemes, *(c)* in full-time employment and *(d)* in part-time employment, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information about 1985 unemployed school leavers and those in employment is not available because the Department of Employment statistics do not indicate the year in which a young person left school. The number participating in YTS is only available at Manpower Services Commission area office level. The latest available information as at the end of January 1986 is as follows:

	Numbers
Gwent	2,879
West Glamorgan and Dyfed	3,799
Mid and South Glamorgan	5,366
Gwynedd, Clwyd and Powys	3,957

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Paraquat

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about hazards arising from the supply of paraquat to developing countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I have received no such representations. We have no objection in principle to the supply of such herbicides and pesticides as paraquat under the aid programme, but we would need to be satisfied that its use would have no harmful effects on those who handled it and on the environment generally.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature Conservancy Council (Exhibition)

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has considered an application for an exhibition by the Nature Conservancy Council to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes, and I look forward to attending the opening of the NCC's exhibition on 10 March.

Airey Houses (Devon)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if West Devon borough council has sought any additional housing investment programme allocation from his Department in respect of Airey houses at South Zeal and Chagford.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No.

Empty Properties (Wirral)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to refuse any request for those Wirral councillors who own properties within the borough for a dispensation so that they can vote on a motion to levy rates on empty properties.

Mrs. Rumbold: No application for dispensation under section 97 of the Local Government Act 1972 has been received on this matter. Any such application would be considered on its merits.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce legislation to exempt applicants for home improvement grants in respect of households which contained a disabled person from being debarred from grant because of the upper limit of rateable value.

Sir George Young: Rateable value limits are already disapplied for intermediate grants and improvement grants where the application is for a dwelling occupied by a disabled person and the works are needed to meet a requirement arising from that person's particular disability. My right hon. Friend sees no reason to extend this concession to cover works which do not relate to disability.

Truscon RD27 Houses, Liverpool

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of the building research station on Truscon RD27 houses in Storrington avenue, Liverpool.

Sir George Young: I have received this report and am considering its findings. I shall write to the hon. Member shortly.

Departmental Offices, Coatbridge

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects construction work to commence on the new Department of Health and Social Security and Department of Employment offices in Coatbridge, at the request of the Property Services Agency.

Sir George Young: I am reviewing the Property Services Agency's future new works programme in the light of the funds available. No decision has so far been taken which affects the Coatbridge scheme and I will write to the hon. Member as soon as I can.

1992 Olympic Games

Sir Reginald Eyre asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what provision is to be made for the financial security of the 1992 Olympics in the event of Birmingham receiving the nomination to host the games.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The Birmingham Olympic Council, of which the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Howell) is president, has declared its intention that the Games should be entirely privately financed. I welcome this approach. Nevertheless, the Government recognise that if preparations for the Games were well advanced and they were subsequently to be cancelled as a result of circumstances entirely beyond Birmingham's control, the city might be left with a large financial liability. The Government therefore propose to seek legislation providing for an indemnity to the city council in such circumstances. The indemnity would only apply to net losses in excess of £100 million incurred as a direct consequence of its preparations to stage the Games. The Government will expect the organising committee and the city of Birmingham to use their best endeavours to minimise the risk of loss and the potential call on public funds.

If Birmingham receives the nomination to host the 1992 Olympics I shall seek an early opportunity to introduce the relevant legislation for the indemnity.

I have written today to the leader of Birmingham city council to this effect and I have placed a copy of my letter in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Correspondence (Bar Chairman)

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter to the chairman of the Bar, dated 6 January, a copy of the Lord Chancellor's letter of 7 February and the Bar's reply in each case.

The Attorney-General: I did not write to the chairman of the Bar on the 6 January. However, I did write to him on the 6 February. I am arranging for a copy of that letter to be placed in the Library of the House, together with the other letters referred to by my hon. Friend. All these letters have been published.

Legal Aid

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General if, pursuant to the reply of 17 February to the hon. Member for Montgomery (Sir John Stradling Thomas) *Official Report*, column *1*, at any time he or his officials agreed with the Bar that negotiations on remuneration of criminal legal aid fees should be concluded by the end of January 1986.

The Attorney-General: The Bar has obtained leave to institute proceedings for judicial review. These matters are likely to be material to that case. That being so it would be improper for me to comment.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Education Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report* the level of education spending by his Department for each of the last five years expressed as a proportion of the gross domestic product.

Dr. Mawhinney: The table expresses actual expendure on education in Northern Ireland in financial years as a percentage of the Northern Ireland gross domestic product (at factor cost) for the nearest appropriate calender year:

	Per cent.
1980-81	10·5
1981-82	10·5
1982-83	10·3
1983-84	10·0
1984-85	9·8

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of per capita spending on education in Northern Ireland; and how that compares with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: Estimated figures for 1985-86 are as follows:

Northern Ireland—£861; Rest of United Kingdom—£845. (*Note:* Per capita relates to the total population under 25 years old.)

Secondary Education

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what facilities exist in the Province for promoting technical education in secondary schools.

Dr. Mawhinney: Most secondary schools in Northern Ireland provide a wide and developing range of facilities to promote technical education. These include specialist facilities for craft design and technology and specialist accommodation and equipment for science and micro-computing. In addition the education and library boards provide a range of support services in connection with technical education.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the extent to which selection forms part of the secondary education system in the Province.

Dr. Mawhinney: While there are a few small areas in Northern Ireland where the transfer from primary to secondary education is based on non-selection the vast majority of pupils in Northern Ireland transfer to either secondary intermediate or grammar schools on the basis of selection.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of children is in each type of secondary school in the Province.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is as follows:

	January 1985 Percentage
Secondary intermediate schools	65·2
Grammar schools	34·8

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current pupil-teacher ratio in Northern Ireland; and how that figure compares with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: The latest available information is for the 1984-85 school year and is as follows:

	Pupil-teacher ratio
Northern Ireland	18·6
England	18·3
Wales	18·5
Scotland	16·5

Note: Ratios relate to maintained schools in England, Scotland and Wales and grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland.

Examination Results

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will provide such information as is available to him on the pass rates and grades achieved by pupils in public examinations in Northern Ireland in each year since 1960; how these figures compare with the equivalent figures for the rest of the United Kingdom; and to what extent he attributes any variations in the level of performance indicated by the figures for Northern Ireland, on the one hand, and Great Britain on the other, to the differing ranges of A-level options available to pupils in the two parts of the United Kingdom.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information for each year since 1960 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information on pass-rates in selected years is as follows.

Northern Ireland has a lower entry rate to public examinations than England and Wales. This makes it difficult to assess the significance of the variations and whether they can be attributed to any specific factor.

		1960	*1965*	*1970*	*1975*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
England and Wales										
CSE										
Percentage achieving grade	1	—	12·2	15·4	14·6	14·4	14·6	14·7	15·3	15·8
	2	—	20·6	20·7	18·3	18·7	19·0	19·0	19·3	19·4
	3	—	23·3	23·7	22·0	23·1	23·1	23·2	23·3	23·5
	4	—	26·6	24·7	23·9	24·3	24·2	24·1	24·0	23·8
	5	—	10·9	10·0	12·5	12·1	12·1	12·1	11·7	11·0
Total	1-5	—	93·7	94·4	91·2	92·4	93·0	93·1	93·5	93·5
GCE 'O' Level										
Percentage achieving grade	A				10·5	9·9	9·9	9·7	10·0	9·9
	B				21·9	20·2	20·2	20·0	20·2	19·7
	C				27·0	27·4	27·6	27·6	27·6	27·3
Total	A-C	57·9	58·0	59·8	59·4	57·4	57·7	57·4	57·8	57·0
GCE 'A' Level										
Percentage achieving grade	A		8·6	8·7	9·0	8·8	9·2	8·9	9·4	9·6
	B		14·6	13·6	13·6	13·8	13·7	13·4	13·7	14·2
	C		10·4	11·7	11·8	11·8	11·8	12·1	12·2	12·3
	D		14·0	14·5	14·6	14·5	14·5	14·7	14·7	14·5
	E		20·7	20·2	19·5	19·1	19·0	19·2	19·3	19·3
Total	A-E	67·2	68·8	68·6	68·4	67·9	68·1	68·2	69·4	69·9
Northern Ireland										
CSE										
Percentage achieving grade	1	—	—	—	20·7	13·5	14·1	16·0	15·8	16·6
	2	—	—	—	20·4	17·2	17·2	18·3	17·5	18·5
	3	—	—	—	22·8	21·8	22·3	22·8	22·2	23·8
	4	—	—	—	19·8	23·0	22·5	22·0	22·4	22·9
	5	—	—	—	6·1	7·5	7·1	6·1	6·1	6·5
Total	1-5	—	—	—	89·8	83·0	83·2	85·2	84·0	88·3
GCE 'O' Level										
Percentage achieving grade	A				11·0	11·2	11·1	11·0	11·4	11·7
	B				26·6	25·0	25·0	25·1	25·3	25·1
	C				29·6	29·0	28·7	28·7	29·1	29·4

		1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total	A-C	79·3	72·5	67·3	67·1	65·3	64·9	64·9	65·8	66·1
GCE 'A' Level										
Percentage achieving grade	A				10·7	10·5	10·6	10·6	10·7	11·4
	B				16·1	15·3	15·7	15·3	15·3	14·9
	C				13·7	15·2	14·6	15·0	15·2	15·2
	D				15·5	15·9	16·1	16·6	15·8	16·6
	E				20·7	19·2	19·4	19·0	19·1	18·3
Total	A-E	82·5	77·7	75·6	76·7	76·1	76·3	76·5	76·1	76·4

Note: Figures for England and Wales "pass-rates" do not always accord with the sum total of grades because pass-rates include subjects for which the grade of pass is not available.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the last five years for which records are available, the average age of those who died from *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emhpysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. Needham: The information requested is a follows:

Year	*Malignant neoplasm of trachea bronchus and lung*		*Bronchitis and Emphysema*		*Ischaemic heart disease*	
	Average age at death		*Average age at death*		*Average age at death*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1980	68	67	73	73	69	75
1981	68	67	75	74	69	75
1982	68	66	73	76	69	75
1983	68	67	75	76	70	76
1984	69	68	74	74	70	76

RUC (Expenditure)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will itemise the additional expenditure on the Royal Ulster Constabulary required by recent political developments in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: Additional expenditure on the Royal Ulster Constabulary generated by recent political developments in Northern Ireland is estimated at £1 million and includes the costs of the policing of the January by-elections and the provision of security arrangements for the intergovernmental conference.

SCOTLAND

Community Services Projects

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's support for community service projects in Scotland; and whether he has any plans to extend or develop his Department's work in this area;

(2) if he will estimate how many people have been involved in community service schemes supported by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: On present support I refer to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Thursday 20 February at column 266. I intend to maintain financial support within available resources for a range of schemes which help both unemployed people and others to become involved in serving the needs of the community.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the deaths in Scotland in each of the last five years for which records are available attributed to *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. John MacKay: The figures are as follows:

Deaths from selected causes, by sex, Scotland, 1980 to 1984

ICD* Code	Underlying cause of death		1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	Males	2,961	2,997	2,917	2,991	2,953
		Females	990	1,117	1,199	1,187	1,272
		Total	3,951	4,114	4,116	4,178	4,225
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	Males	1,170	967	991	768	692
		Females	388	398	399	313	317
		Total	1,558	1,365	1,390	1,081	1,009
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	Males	10,050	10,272	10,198	10,271	10,057
		Females	7,835	8,181	8,435	8,064	8,050
		Total	17,885	18,453	18,633	18,335	18,107

* International Classification of Diseases

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the last five years for which records are available, the average age of those who died from *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. John MacKay: The readily available figures are given in the table:

Estimated average ages of persons dying from selected causes, by sex, Scotland, 1980 to 1984

ICD* Code	Underlying cause of death		1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	Males	68·3	68·4	68·2	68·8	69·1
		Females	66·7	67·1	67·6	68·1	68·1
		Persons	67·9	68·1	68·1	68·6	68·8
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	Males	72·2	73·0	73·5	73·6	73·1
		Females	71·8	72·2	73·2	71·3	71·7
		Persons	72·1	72·8	73·4	72·9	72·6
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	Males	68·7	68·8	69·3	69·1	69·5
		Females	74·8	75·3	75·4	75·5	75·7
		Persons	71·4	71·7	72·1	71·9	72·3

* International Classification of Diseases

Life Expectancy

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list in the *Official Report* the expectation of life at age 16 years for men and women in each of the past 30 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The figures which are readily available for the past 30 years relate to age 15 years and are as follows:

Expectation of further life in years, at age 15, by sex, Scotland, 1955 to 1984

Year	Males	Females
1955	53·7	58·1
1956	53·8	58·4
1957	53·9	58·7
1958	53·9	58·6
1959	53·8	58·7
1960	54·1	59·1
1961	53·7	58·9
1962	53·8	59·1
1963	53·4	59·0
1964	54·0	59·8
1965	53·9	59·6
1966	53·9	59·5
1967	54·5	60·4
1968	54·1	59·8
1969	54·0	59·8
1970	54·1	59·9
1971	54·5	60·5
1972	54·1	60·1
1973	54·2	60·3
1974	54·3	60·3
1975	54·6	60·8
1976	54·4	60·5
1977	54·9	61·0
1978	54·6	60·4
1979	54·5	60·6
1980	55·1	61·1
1981	55·3	61·5
1982	55·5	61·3
1983	55·7	61·6
1984	56·1	61·9

Toll Bridges

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the accumulated deficits at the latest available date on the Forth, Tay and Erskine bridges, respectively, together with the current annual interest paid on each and the anticipated net toll income for each bridge after deduction of collection and operating costs.

Mr. Rifkind: The latest available figures for the three bridges are set out in the following table.

	Accumulated deficit £	Current annual interest paid £	Total loan - repayments £
Forth road bridge (at 31 March 1985)	21,483,826	1,374,544	*505,187
Tay road bridge (at 31 March 1985)			
Owed to Secretary of State	2,789,665	209,743	†22,257
Owed to joint board's constituent authorities	3,357,335	216,600	†34,400
Erskine bridge (at 31 March 1984)	36,960,279	4,870,223	‡—

* Equals income after deduction of operating costs, capital expenditure costs (eg resurfacing), deficit in the revenue account brought forward from 1983-84, and interest payment.

† Equals income paid to Secretary of State and constituent authorities after deduction of operating costs, capital expenditure costs (nil), payment into the reserve fund (£367,000) and interest payments.

‡ Income from the Erskine bridge, after deduction of operating costs and capital expenditure costs amounted to £588,287. After payments of interest, payment of amortisation and payment into the sinking fund, this became a loss of £6,459,901 which has been included in the accumulated deficit figure.

Teachers (Dispute)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will define the nature of the compromise he told representatives of the Scottish Churches he was prepared to make on the Scottish teacher's dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which I gave on 13 February to the hon. Members for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) and for Gordon, (Mr. Bruce).

SDA (Coatbridge Development)

Mr. Tom Clarke asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the cost to the Scottish Development Agency of making mineral and other preparations for the new Department of Health and Social Security and Department of Employment offices at Coatbridge.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The total amount so far expended by the Scottish Development Agency in preparing the Coatbridge south circular road site for use is £244,000. Of this total £122,000 is directly attributable to the area of the site intended for use by the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Employment.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Falkland Islands

Mr. Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest total since April 1982 of *(a)* defence expenditure in the Falklands and *(b)* development expenditure in the Falklands.

Mr. Eggar: Total expenditure in these areas in the Falklands from April 1982 up to the end of financial year 1985-86 is estimated as follows

(a) Defence expenditure: £2,603 million. This includes the cost of recovering the Islands following the Argentine invasion, of residual campaign costs since, and of the airport and associated works at Mount Pleasant.

(b) Development expenditure: £31·8 million . This covers rehabilitation grant and development aid expenditure, and part of the cost of the new hospital.

Diplomats (Parking Fines)

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will publish up-to-date figures held by his Department as to unpaid parking fines incurred by diplomatic missions.

Mr. Eggar: The improvement to which I referred in my answer of 15 November to my hon. Friend has continued. The figures below for the final quarter 1985 indicate that the annual rate of fixed penalty notices cancelled on grounds of diplomatic immunity was by then running at only 34 per cent. of that for 1984. We welcome the co-operation of the diplomatic corps in bringing about this significant fall and are determined to see a further improvement.

Organisation Country	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Afghanistan	3	7	3	7
Algeria	285	299	254	139
Antigua & Barbuda	0	0	0	0
Australia	0	0	0	0
Austria	18	14	10	6
Bahamas	5	4	3	1
Bahrain	166	167	174	114
Bangladesh	71	70	48	53
Barbados	58	68	38	39
Belgium	12	17	20	17
Bolivia	15	2	0	2
Botswana	2	2	9	2
Brazil	1,025	499	20	33
Brunei	29	53	48	33
Bulgaria	579	647	389	317
Burma	91	95	91	29
Cameroon	268	268	297	119
Canada	67	45	69	51
Chile	131	107	73	39
China	149	263	203	148
Colombia	92	68	22	17
Costa Rica	146	155	128	74
Cuba	473	408	129	8
Cyprus	532	178	35	37
Czechoslovakia	60	34	24	20
Denmark	0	1	0	0
Eastern Caribbean States	6	1	5	7
Ecuador	58	55	31	31
Egypt	1,357	1,022	747	519
El Salvador	0	5	4	2
Ethiopia	88	58	55	37
Fiji	15	12	8	24
Finland	102	109	72	64
France	486	438	253	239
Gabon	50	72	82	95
Gambia	69	68	63	101
German Democratic Republic	130	112	49	38
Germany, Federal Republic of	31	27	35	39
Ghana	334	388	276	237
Greece	288	369	238	144
Grenada	0	1	0	1
Guyana	35	41	30	31
Haiti	0	0	2	0
Honduras	91	81	72	54

Organisation Country	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter
Hungary	397	290	135	133
Iceland	42	18	13	18
India	86	105	100	104
Indonesia	500	295	134	152
Iran	183	247	197	158
Iraq	498	692	439	335
Ireland, Republic of	221	149	53	47
Israel	50	64	32	48
Italy	633	347	212	190
Ivory Coast	101	157	118	56
Jamaica	375	164	92	40
Japan	433	231	87	96
Jordan	597	537	478	322
Kenya	269	481	468	197
Korea	35	16	25	16
Kuwait	176	136	111	48
Lebanon	21	7	10	4
Lesotho	25	33	24	31
Liberia	24	39	35	27
Luxembourg	0	0	0	0
Malawi	30	59	26	2
Malaysia	769	572	175	123
Malta, Republic of	58	79	31	76
Mauritius	27	32	22	14
Mexico	58	81	66	61
Mongolia	3	3	2	2
Morocco	203	232	95	80
Nepal	28	6	3	2
Netherlands	5	6	4	2
New Zealand	0	0	0	0
Nicaragua	21	17	10	13
Nigeria, Federal Republic of	1,070	549	495	631
Norway	21	19	16	18
Oman	220	187	124	62
Pakistan	533	305	170	99
Panama	51	46	38	17
Papua New Guinea	1	0	1	4
Paraguay	43	35	21	24
Peru	148	119	79	71
Philippines	77	124	119	101
Poland	519	486	125	85
Portugal	263	206	82	110
Qatar	249	87	0	78
Romania	104	86	59	63
Saudi Arabia	852	636	538	240
Senegal	69	118	31	13
Seychelles	3	2	4	5
Sierra Leone	76	111	125	84
Singapore	19	3	1	1
Somali, Democratic Republic of	62	25	6	10
South Africa, Republic of	2	4	3	6
Soviet Union	308	335	262	219
Spain	325	314	108	136
Sri Lanka	79	117	85	75
Sudan	479	396	342	239
Swaziland	2	7	1	1
Sweden	26	14	8	14
Switzerland	6	0	3	4
Syria, Arab Republic of	247	179	117	88
Tanzania	224	234	150	93
Thailand	365	288	182	153
Togo	22	5	14	23
Tonga	0	0	1	2
Trinidad & Tobago	36	39	26	23
Tunisia	99	91	49	46
Turkey	365	354	201	108
Uganda	521	319	125	135
United Arab Emirates	316	286	273	210
United States of America	47	65	28	34
Uruguay	84	87	84	58
Venezuela	117	130	80	95
Vietnam	0	3	3	2
Yemen Arab Republic	24	20	6	4
People's Democratic Republic of Yemen	62	84	69	50
Yugoslavia	143	178	89	63
Zaire	69	66	59	19
Zambia	135	134	89	68
Zimbabwe	149	133	159	143
Apostolic Delegation	0	0	0	0
C'wealth Secretariat	36	49	47	39
IMO	0	0	14	2
WEU	1	0	1	2
Cocoa	0	1	0	1
United Nations	0	1	1	0
EEC	2	1	1	1
Coffee	2	0	2	0
INMARSAT	1	0	1	0
Sugar	2	0	0	0
Totals (61,724)	21,961	18,503	12,023	9,237

Note: Some of these figures are likely to be reduced by late payments.

Turkey—EEC (Relations)

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on present relations between Turkey and the EEC.

Mr. Renton: Relations between Turkey and the European Community are improving in recognition of Turkey's progress in restoring democracy. The welcome visit to London this week by the Turkish Prime Minister was an indication of this. At the Foreign Affairs Council on 17 February there was general agreement that work should go ahead on a number of outstanding issues, including the unblocking of EC aid money already committed to Turkey, with the aim of holding a Ministerial meeting of the EC-Turkey Association Council as soon as possible.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what proportion of the estimated level of spending on the Trident programme is currently projected to take place in 1985-86, 1986-87 and 1987-88, respectively;

(2) what proportion of total spending on the Trident project is currently projected to have been incurred up to and including *(a)* the financial year 1989-90 and *(b)* the financial year 1994-95, respectively;

(3) what proportion of total spending on the Trident project has been incurred up to, and including, the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have nothing to add to the answer given by my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Sir A. Butler) to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 21 June 1985 at column *247*. It is not the practice to give cost profiles for projects on a year by year basis.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on the Trident programme in each financial year up to 1984-85.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I refer to the answer which my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Sir A. Butler) gave to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 21 June 1985 at column *247*. As indicated in that answer, there is a minor adjustment to the figures in the table for financial year 1984-85, which should read £163 million.

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence why, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) of 6 December, *Official Report*, column *387*, he considers it not to be in the public interest to reveal details of the manpower effort engaged on research into verification of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It would not be in the national security interest to reveal full details of research into verification of a CTB, including the manpower effort involved, for the reasons set out by my predecessor, the right hon. Member for Bosworth (Sir A. Butler) in answer to a question on 4 April 1985 at column *703*. However, I am able to inform the hon. Member that 29 staff are engaged currently on unclassified seismological research at the establishments at Blacknest and Eskdalemuir, including permanent civil servants and contract and visiting academic staff.

Blacknest Seismological Centre

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the work done at the Blacknest Seismological Centre in Berkshire has been published in unrestricted form in scientific journals.

Mr. Norman Lamont: There is no restriction on the publication of the work of Blacknest, which is extensively published in scientific journals. The majority appears in the *Geophysical Journal* of the Royal Astronomical Society, in other learned journals, and in reports available from HMSO. Some is also published as working papers to the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

RIMPAC Naval Exercise

Mr. Caborn asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether Britain will be joining the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation force in the RIMPAC exercise in the central Pacific; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 4 February at column *122*.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence which surface vessels will remain deployed in the north Atlantic during the RIMPAC exercise.

Mr. Stanley: It is not our practice to detail the planned operational deployment of HM ships.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence how the RIMPAC exercise relates to the strategic issues of United Kingdom defence policy.

Mr. Stanley: Effective collective defence is one of the cornerstones of our defence policy. The Royal Navy therefore takes as many opportunities as it can to exercise with the navies of allied and friendly powers.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what effect the deployment of the Royal Navy vessels for the RIMPAC exercise and to defend the Falkland Islands have on the United Kingdom's naval commitment to NATO.

Mr. Stanley: The vessels concerned remain assigned to NATO and could be recalled to the NATO area at any time.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence what queries and representations he has received regarding the RIMPAC naval exercise; and which of these have been referred to the United States authorities.

Mr. Stanley: I am not aware of any representations. Certain hon. Members have tabled parliamentary questions about this exercise and there have been a few press inquiries. When our armed forces are to participate in an exercise sponsored by another country, it is our normal practice to liaise as necessary with that country's authorities when responding to queries about that exercise.

Republic of Ireland

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of Defence what has been the annual cost over the last five years for which figures are available of providing Royal Air Force search and rescue helicopters and Nimrod tracking aircraft for searches in or over Republic of Ireland territorial waters or involving Republic of Ireland ships or aircraft.

Mr. Stanley: I regret that this information could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions in the last five years the Republic of Ireland has allowed Royal Air Force or Royal Navy vessels or aircraft into its territorial waters or airspace, or to use port or airfield facilities; and if he will list the dates and circumstances of such occasions.

Mr. Stanley: Not all the information requested is available. Since 1982 diplomatic clearance has been sought and granted for 23 landings by RAF aircraft at airfields in the Republic of Ireland. This figure does not include requests made at short notice, for example, for emergency flights or search and rescue missions. Since 1982, clearance has been sought and granted on one occasion for a Royal Navy vessel to visit a port in the Republic of Ireland, when HMS Challenger landed wreckage recovered from the Air India Boeing 747 crash, at Cork in June 1985.

RAF aircraft make frequent flights through the airspace of the Republic of Ireland. In the 12 months to 31 January 1986, clearance was sought and granted for 446 overflights. This figure also does not include requests made at short notice.

Goalkeeper Close-in Weapon Systems

Sir Antony Buck asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make an announcement on the procurement by the United Kingdom of further Goalkeeper close-in weapon systems for fitment to Royal Navy ships.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Government have recently commenced negotiations with the Dutch company Hollandse Signaal Apparaaten towards the possible

purchase of a further nine Goalkeeper close-in weapon systems plus associated equipment. The United Kingdom already has six systems on order.

This additional procurement would form the United Kingdom part of a second Anglo-Netherlands reciprocal purchase package agreement which is currently approaching finalisation. The Netherlands' element of the package comprises purchases from the United Kingdom of satellite communications equipment, submarine towed arrays and military simulation equipment. The agreement will be a most worthwhile extension of the first Anglo-Netherlands reciprocal arrangement concluded in April 1984, covering the United Kingdom's first purchase of Goalkeeper and the Netherlands' purchase of 16 Rolls-Royce Spey engines for their M class frigates.

Computers

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the purpose of the database computer ordered from ICL by the Ministry of Defence (Central) in January 1984; where it will be installed; and when installation will be completed.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The computer was acquired for the directorate of central computer services to provide bureau facilities to certain Ministry of Defence headquarters staffs. The machine was installed in central London in February 1984, and accepted for service in March 1984.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence what computers, other than minicomputers and microcomputers, have been ordered by the Ministry of Defence for administrative and general purposes since December 1983 stating the supplier, model and number of each processor ordered and the cost of each processor.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what stage negotiations have reached regarding strategic defence initiative contracts with the Science and Engineering Research Council in relation to work on particle beam accelerators at the Rutherford-Appleton laboratory and at Culham.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am not aware of any proposal for work in the area mentioned to be placed with the Science and Engineering research council.

TRANSPORT

Asbestos

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport what grants are available to local authorities which have tunnels and road constructions containing dangerous amounts of asbestos.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Funds are not made available specifically for the removal of asbestos from local authority tunnels and road constructions. Rate support grant is paid in support of authorities' revenue expenditure generally including expenditure on asbestos.

Air Services

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate what success he had in negotiating changes in the Bermuda 2 Agreement; if he will publish in the *Official Report* a record of the discussions; and if he will make a statement about the effect of American anti-trust laws on British airlines.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My right hon. Friend visited Washington on 13 and 14 February 1986 to discuss these matters with the United States Secretary for Transportation, Mrs. Elizabeth Dole, and other senior members of the US Administration. These matters will be the subject of continuing negotiations. My right hon. Friend also expressed his views publicly in a speech to the International Aviation Club, of which copies are available in the Library of the House. As regards the effect of United States anti-trust laws on British airlines the Government's position is set out in the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the former Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on 11 December.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the chairman of British Rail to discuss investment in rail projects related to the Channel tunnel, as proposed in the White Paper, Cmnd. 9735; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Secretary of State and I meet the chairman of British Rail regularly to discuss matters of mutual interest, including the Channel fixed link. It will be for British Rail to come forward with proposals for investment in services related to the Channel fixed link in the usual way.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has identified any possible advantages to British exporters occasioned by the completion of the Channel tunnel which will not also be available to British importers.

Mr. David Mitchell: Improvements in communications between the United Kingdom and the Continent necessarily benefit trade in both directions. The fixed link will improve the access of British exporters to the large European market, and offer them increased opportunities to benefit from the economies of scale that are already available to continental manufacturers.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what through Motorail services he expects to be operated by British Rail or the SNCF through the Channel tunnel; and if any agreement related to its operation would prohibit or limit such services;

(2) what consideration he has given to the operation of through daytime passenger trains from centres in the United Kingdom, other than London, to centres on the continent using the proposed Channel tunnel;

(3) what consideration he has given to the operation of through sleeping car services from London and other British cities to destinations on the continent via the proposed Channel tunnel.

Mr. David Mitchell: Undoubtedly the Channel tunnel will provide opportunities for new British Rail services to the Continent, but planning of these services is a matter

for British Rail and the continental railway administrations. The terms on which the railway administrations use the Channel Fixed Link is a matter for agreement between them and CTG—France-Manche.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will tabulate the estimated current costs of the improvements and additions to rail and road links to the Channel tunnel terminal as indicated in Cmnd. No. 9735, and give the expected source of funding for each category concerned.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail estimates that it could need to spend up to around £180 million on railway infrastructure associated with rail services through the Channel fixed link. This will be a commercial operation and it will be for it to raise the money for this investment from its own resources or borrowing and not by way of Government grant. The estimated total cost of the national road improvements, to be funded through the roads vote in the usual way, is £135 million, all of which would have been incurred without a link in order to improve road links to the ferry ports. The cost of improving local road links to the ferry ports. The cost of improving local roads is a matter for Kent county council which will be submitting proposals for transport supplementary grant in due course.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of the cost of modifying the Folkestone to London railway for passage of conventional railway trains of continental loading gauge; and what consideration he has given to such a modification.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for British Rail to propose and make estimates of the costs of, railway investment. It has made no proposals to up-grade the routes from London to the coast to continental gauge.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in the *Official Report* the details of the proposed limited improvements to rail facilities between Folkestone and London.

Mr. David Mitchell: BR's initial evaluation included proposals for total expenditure of up to about £35 million on track quality improvements, connections, signalling, clearances and freight loops on the lines between London and the coast.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the number, and approximate location, of full rail crossover facilities which he expects to be built within the Channel tunnel;

(2) what is the maximum number of trains of all types that he expects to be permitted to occupy each of the two bores of the Channel tunnel at any one time.

Mr. David Mitchell: As we explained in the Channel fixed link White Paper (Cmnd. 9735, paragraph 52), a safety authority is being established by the British and French Governments to consider safety aspects of the promoters' plans. The two issues which the hon. Member has raised, along with many others, will be covered by those considerations.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of the time taken by *(a)* motor cars and *(b)* heavy lorries on a journey from London to Paris using (i) the proposed Channel tunnel ferry facility and (ii) hovercraft and ferry, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Channel Tunnel Group-France-Manche estimated in its proposal that, for vehicles using shuttle trains, the transit time through the link itself, including loading, unloading, frontier formalities and average waiting time, will be some 70 minutes as opposed to an average of some 135 minutes for vehicles using hovercraft and ferries on the French straits routes. It is not possible to make precise estimates of London-Paris times by road.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has of the reduction in cost for *(a)* freight and *(b)* passengers of crossing the Channel by tunnel rather than by sea ferry.

Mr. David Mitchell: It will be for the concessionaires to decide on tariff levels for the link, subject to domestic and Community competition law, in the light of the competitive situation prevailing at the time of opening of the link. Channel Tunnel Group-France-Manche envisages that its tariffs will be around 10 per cent. less, in real terms, than today's level of ferry fares, and it has said its policy will be to match the tariffs offered by their major competitors.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what body or person will determine the proportion of available capacity of the proposed Channel tunnel which will be available *(a)* to ferry trains operated by the Channel Tunnel Group and *(b)* through trains operated by British and French railways.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for agreement by the railway administrations and CTG—France-Manche.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what body or person will determine the differences or equivalence between the tariffs and tolls on the Channel tunnel between traffic conveyed by Channel ferry wagons and through rail services, respectively.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to paragraph 4 of the White Paper on the Channel fixed link (Cmnd. 9735). Channel Tunnel Group—France-Manche will enjoy full commercial freedom to determine its commercial policy, including the setting of tariffs for users of the link, subject to domestic and Community competition law. For through trains it will be for British Rail to decide on fare levels in the light of contractual arrangements entered into with CTG—FM for the use of the tunnel.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected proportion of capital to be raised by the Channel Tunnel Group and its partners from British, French, and other sources, respectively; and what equivalent representation he expects on the board of the operating company.

Mr. David Mitchell: Although the invitation to promoters reserved the right of the Governments to be kept informed of the identity of those who acquired an interest in shares in companies holding the concession, the source of the capital is a commercial matter for the concessionaires. The two Governments have yet to decide whether there should be any requirements as regards the composition of the board of the operating company.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport if any provision is planned to determine any

maximum or minimum proportions of nationality of persons directly employed on the construction of the proposed Channel tunnel or its associate works.

Mr. David Mitchell: No such provision is planned.

Regulatory Bodies

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the regulatory bodies in the transport field that his Department is responsible for funding, giving the annual funding at the latest available date, in each case, and the numbers of staff employed.

Mr. Ridley: My Department does not fund any regulatory bodies in the transport field although it pays the salaries of the eight chairmen of traffic commissioners. The current annual cost is about £220,000. The staff of the traffic commissioners are civil servants employed by my Department.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 424, about his Department's staff, if he will place in the Library a chart showing the lines of management, running from himself to each of the directorates listed in the previous answer.

Mr. Ridley: Yes. I will do so shortly.

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 424, about his Department's staff, if he will list the functions of the 465 central administration staff.

Mr. Ridley: The information is:

Function	*Staff in post at 1 January 1986*
Information and publicity	33
Civil home defence planning	30·5
Science and research policy	16
Statistics	111·5
Economics	26
Finance	134·5
Support staff for Treasury Solicitors	5
Ministers' and other staff offices	53
Others, including staff on maternity and long term sick leave	55·5
	465

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 424, about his Department's staff, if he will list the geographical location of all staff, distinguishing between directorates in each case.

Mr. Ridley: I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as I can.

British Airways Helicopters

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that employees of British Airways Helicopters are given an opportunity to buy out the company; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that the proposed sale of British Airways Helicopters does not proceed before consultations with the work force have taken place;

(3) if he will make a statement about the future of British Airways Helicopters;

(4) what representations he has received about the proposed sale by British Airways of British Airways Helicopters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The board of British Airways has taken the view that it is in its commercial interest to dispose of British Airways Helicopters as that business is not in the mainstream of its activities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport has agreed to this in principle. The British Airways Board is bound to inform him when it has a fully formulated proposal for the sale of the company; but at this stage negotiations are entirely a matter for the board. I understand from British Airways that negotiations are continuing but that no agreement has been reached. I also understand that consultations with the unions are in progress and that outline details of a possible proposal have been explained to employees. The unions therefore have the opportunity to make known any interest employees may have in taking a stake in the company.

A number of hon. Members have inquired about the proposed disposal of British Airways Helicopters, but no other representations have been received.

Shrewsbury Bypass

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the anticipated start date for the Shrewsbury A5 bypass.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The made line order for the A5 Shrewsbury bypass is subject to legal challenge so I am unable to give an anticipated start date.

Maritime Services

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is satisfied with the present arrangements for running Trinity House and the Northern Lighthouse Board.

Mr. Ridley [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1986]: The Twenty-Ninth Report from the Committee of Public Accounts 1981-82 said

"we find it anomalous that the Department has general responsibility for the General Lighthouse Fund but no power to appoint the Lighthouse Authorities and to regulate management of the lighthouse services themselves."

I share that view and so I welcomed the proposal from Trinity House 18 months ago that I should nominate four members of its Lighthouse Board. This has proved a most successful innovation. The constitution of the NLB raises different considerations since it is determined by statute.

SOCIAL SERVICES

NHS Staff (Overtime)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will estimate the amount and cost of overtime worked by health service employees in the last financial year.

Mr. Hayhoe: Payments to health authority staff in respect of overtime are estimated to have totalled some

£127 million in 1984-85. This estimate excludes medical and dental staff, for whom comparable figures are not available. The estimate is derived from health authorities' summarised accounts, and is net of employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.

I regret that details of overtime measured in terms of hours worked are not held centrally.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what criteria are to be used in determining the social fund budget for each local Department of Health and Social Security office.

Mr. Newton: Decisions about the size of the fund itself and the allocation to local offices will be taken nearer the date of introduction.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish tables comparable to tables P1 to P6 in the technical annex to "Reform of Social Security," Cmnd. 9691, showing pension projections on the assumption that the contracted-out rebate is not boosted by the 2 per cent, incentive addition for the first five years.

Mr. Newton *[pursuant to his reply,* 17 February 1986 c. *69-70]* : The information requested is given in the tables. Tables P1A to P6A correspond to tables P1 to P6 respectively in the Technical Annex to the White Paper.

Table P1A
Males more years with earnings
Pension projections (£ per week at November 1985 prices) Excluding 2 per cent. Bonus Rebate

Age in 1988	*Earner*	*Modified SERPS*	*Personal Pensions*						*Occupational money purchase pension schemes*					
			Rebate only			*Rebate + 2 per cent.*			*Rebate + 2 per cent.*			*Rebate + 4 per cent.*		
			**rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*
16	Low	64	70	75	81	89	97	106	91	99	108	110	121	133
	Middle	93	103	112	123	142	156	172	145	159	176	185	204	227
	High	116	128	140	154	182	201	223	186	206	228	242	268	298
20	Low	63	68	72	77	85	91	98	86	92	99	103	111	121
	Middle	90	101	110	119	137	150	165	140	153	168	176	194	215
	High	112	126	137	150	175	192	212	179	197	217	230	254	282
30	Low	61	64	66	69	75	78	82	76	79	83	87	92	97
	Middle	88	92	96	101	115	122	130	117	124	132	141	151	161
	High	109	111	117	123	143	152	161	146	155	164	179	191	204
40	Low	60	58	59	60	64	66	67	65	66	68	71	73	75
	Middle	84	80	82	84	93	96	99	94	97	101	108	112	117
	High	102	93	96	99	113	117	121	115	119	123	135	140	146

Table P2A
Males fewer years with earnings
Pension projections (£ per week at November 1985 prices)

Age in 1988	*Earner*	*Modified SERPS*	*Personal Pensions*						*Occupational money purchase pension schemes*					
			Rebate only			*Rebate + 2 per cent.*			*Rebate + 2 per cent.*			*Rebate + 4 per cent.*		
			**rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*
16	Low	61	66	70	75	83	89	96	84	90	98	101	110	120
	Middle	92	102	110	120	140	153	169	143	156	173	182	201	223
	High	114	125	136	149	178	195	216	182	200	221	236	260	289
20	Low	60	65	69	73	80	86	92	81	87	94	96	104	113
	Middle	89	100	108	117	135	147	161	137	150	165	173	190	210
	High	110	124	135	148	173	191	211	177	195	216	228	252	280
30	Low	58	61	63	66	71	74	78	72	75	79	82	86	91
	Middle	87	91	95	100	114	121	129	116	123	131	140	149	160
	High	109	111	117	123	143	152	161	146	155	164	179	191	204
40	Low	57	56	57	57	61	62	63	61	62	63	66	67	69
	Middle	84	80	82	84	93	96	99	94	97	101	108	112	117
	High	102	93	96	99	113	117	121	115	119	123	135	140	146

Table P3A
Females more years with earnings
Pension projections (£ per week at November 1985 prices) Excluding 2 per cent. bonus rebate

Age in 1988	*Earner*	*Modified SERPS*	*Personal Pensions*						*Occupational money purchase pension schemes*					
			Rebate only			*Rebate + 2 per cent.*			*Rebate + 2 per cent.*			*Rebate + 4 per cent.*		
			**rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*	*rrr=3 per cent.*	*rrr=3·5 per cent.*	*rrr=4 per cent.*
16	Low	50	50	51	53	55	57	59	56	58	60	61	64	67
	Middle	63	62	65	68	74	79	83	75	80	85	88	94	101

Age in 1988	Earner	Modified SERPS	Personal Pensions						Occupational money purchase pension schemes					
			Rebate only			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 4 per cent.		
			*rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.
	High	82	80	85	91	103	110	119	104	112	121	127	138	150
20	Low	50	49	50	51	53	54	56	54	55	56	58	60	61
	Middle	62	60	62	64	70	73	77	71	74	77	82	86	90
	High	80	78	81	85	96	101	107	97	103	109	116	123	131
30	Low	48	46	47	47	49	50	50	49	50	50	52	53	53
	Middle	59	56	56	57	62	63	65	63	64	65	70	71	73
	High	75	70	71	73	82	84	86	83	85	87	95	98	101
40	Low	46	43	44	44	46	46	46	46	46	46	48	48	49
	Middle	57	51	52	52	56	57	57	56	57	58	61	62	63
	High	71	62	63	63	70	71	73	71	72	73	79	81	83

Table P4A

Females fewer years with earnings

Pension projections (£ per week at November 1985 prices) excluding 2 per cent. bonus rebate

Age in 1988	Earner	Modified SERPS	Personal Pensions						Occupational money purchase pension schemes					
			Rebate only			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 4 per cent.		
			*rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.
16	Low	50	50	51	52	54	56	58	55	56	58	60	62	64
	Middle	62	62	64	67	71	75	79	72	76	80	82	86	92
	High	81	80	84	88	97	103	110	98	104	111	116	124	133
20	Low	50	49	50	50	52	53	54	53	54	55	56	58	59
	Middle	62	60	62	63	68	70	72	68	70	73	76	78	82
	High	80	77	79	82	90	94	98	91	95	99	105	110	115
30	Low	46	45	45	45	47	47	47	47	47	47	49	49	50
	Middle	55	52	52	52	56	57	58	57	57	58	61	62	63
	High	68	62	63	64	71	72	73	71	73	74	80	82	83
40	Low	44	42	42	42	44	44	44	44	44	44	45	46	46
	Middle	51	46	47	47	50	51	51	50	51	51	54	55	55
	High	62	53	54	55	60	61	62	60	61	62	67	68	69

Table P5A

Widows retiring in 2008 onwards more years with earnings

Pension projections (£ per week at November 1985 prices) excluding 2 per cent. bonus rebate

Age in 1988	Earner	Modified SERPS	Personal Pensions						Occupational money purchase pension schemes					
			Rebate only			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 4 per cent.		
			*rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.
20	Low	62	63	66	68	75	78	82	75	79	83	87	92	98
	Middle	87	89	94	100	114	121	130	116	123	132	141	152	163
	High	115	117	125	137	156	167	180	159	170	184	198	214	231
30	Low	60	58	59	60	65	66	68	65	67	68	72	74	76
	Middle	83	79	81	84	95	99	103	96	100	104	113	118	123
	High	109	101	104	108	126	131	137	128	133	139	153	160	168
40	Low	56	52	52	53	56	57	57	56	57	58	61	61	62
	Middle	79	70	71	73	80	81	83	81	82	84	90	93	95
	High	102	87	88	90	103	105	108	104	107	109	120	124	127

Table P6A

Widows retiring in 2008 onwards fewer years with earnings

Pension projections (£ per week at November 1985 prices) excluding 2 per cent. bonus rebate

Age in 1988	Earner	Modified SERPS	Personal Pensions						Occupational money purchase pension schemes					
			Rebate only			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 4 per cent.		
			*rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.
20	Low	60	62	64	66	71	75	78	72	75	79	82	87	92
	Middle	86	88	92	97	110	116	124	111	118	126	133	142	153
	High	114	116	122	130	149	159	170	152	162	173	186	199	214
30	Low	56	55	56	56	60	61	63	61	62	63	66	68	70
	Middle	78	75	77	79	88	92	95	90	93	96	104	108	113

Age in 1988	Earner	Modified SERPS	Personal Pensions						Occupational money purchase pension schemes					
			Rebate only			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 2 per cent.			Rebate + 4 per cent.		
			*rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.	rrr=3 per cent.	rrr=3·5 per cent.	rrr=4 per cent.
	High	101	94	96	99	115	119	123	117	121	125	138	144	150
40	Low	53	49	49	50	52	53	53	53	53	53	56	56	57
	Middle	74	66	67	68	74	75	77	75	76	77	83	85	87
	High	93	78	80	81	92	95	97	94	96	98	108	111	114

*rrr = rate of return over prices.

Hospital Waiting List

Mr. Fry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the latest statistics showing the number of urgent cases awaiting treatment, subdivided in the various categories, at Kettering general hospital; and how this compares with the average *(a)* for the Oxford region and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table:

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for admission to NHS hospitals at 30 September 1985 (provisional)

Specialty	Kettering General Hospital		Oxford Regional Health Authority		England total	
	Number of urgent cases	Urgent cases as a percentage of total waiting list cases	Number of urgent cases	Urgent cases as a percentage of total waiting list cases	Number of urgent cases	Urgent cases as a percentage of total waiting list cases
General surgery	3	0·3	352	4·8	7,419	5·4
ENT	0	0·0	41	0·9	3,549	3·5
Traumatic and orthopaedic surgery	0	0·0	592	8·9	11,709	9·1
Gynaecology	0	0·0	76	1·4	3,474	3·8
Other specialties total	2	0·7	530	5·5	16,918	8·5
Total	5	0·2	1,591	4·8	43,069	6·5

Smoking

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many television advertisements he intends to make, and over what period of time they will be spread, within the framework of the £1 million sum which he intends to spend on campaigns to discourage teenagers from smoking; what format is envisaged; what account he has taken of the outcome of the programme of advertisements aimed at discouraging youngsters from drug addiction in deciding the format; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The pilot campaign began in the Tyne Tees and TV South regions on 4 December. Two film advertisements are being shown on television and in cinemas over a period of about 12 months. Of the £1 million allocated to the pilot, about £600,000 is being spent on the purchase of television airtime and cinema screen time. In planning and mounting this campaign consideration was given to the Department's advertising campaign against heroin misuse.

Denture Specialists

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proposals he has received for bringing denture specialists into direct contact with the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Under current legislation only dentists or doctors may fit dentures. Last year however the Association for Dental Prosthesis asked the Office of Fair Trading to enquire into the arrangements for the supply of dentures to the public. After conducting a survey, the Director of Fair Trading reported that there was little evidence of National Health Service dentists making monopoly profits from providing dentures because my Department controls the prices so closely, and that it was unlikely that dental technicians could provide NHS dentures more cheaply. In these circumstances I have no plans to change the present law.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of in vitro fertilisation treatment per person.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Nurses (Residential Accommodation)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library copies of the plans regions have submitted for the disposal of nurses' residential accommodation.

Mr. Hayhoe: I will provide a summary of regions' plans when these have been approved by the Department.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the findings of the Schanshieff committee of inquiry into unnecessary dental treatment.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend to Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) on 20 February.

Benefit Payments

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Scotland without full contribution records have received reduced national insurance benefit payments for each of the last five years; and what was the average payment for each year.

Mr. Major: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Food Additives

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research is being done by his Department on food additives, including flavouring and colouring; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department is not funding any research on food additives. The approval of food additives is based on the advice to Government provided by independent expert committees who, when considering the safety of any particular additive, take into account all the available scientific data. Should these committees require additional information the prospective manufacturer will be asked to privide it.

In addition, central Government funds through the Ministry of Agiculture, Fisheries and Food, research into the more general aspects of food additive safety. One project that is currently being funded in this way is investigating the incidence of intolerance reactions and the biological mechanisms that may promote such reactions.

Portable Pensions

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures he is taking in his plans for portable pensions to ensure that compensation is provided for members of personal pension schemes in the event of negligence, fraud or theft.

Mr. Fowler: I have asked the Occupational Pensions Board for their advice on this question. The terms of the remit are:

"To consider and advise on the requirements to be met by personal pensions and money-purchase occupational pension schemes for providing compensation in the event of fraud, theft or negligence, in the light of the Government's decision that, in principle, everybody with a personal pension should be at least as well protected as someone with an insurance policy covered by the Policyholders Protection Act, and in the light of the desirability that such requirements should be kept as simple and flexible as possible".

Income Support

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his reply on 17 January, *Official Report*, column *746*, he will publish a similar table showing the rate of income support for a single person, assuming annual increases in the income support rate in line with average earnings and annual increases of earnings of 1½ per cent, in real terms *(a)* including the premium for a person aged over 80 years and disabled and *(b)* excluding that premium.

Mr. Newton: [*pursuant to his reply*, 7 February, c. *287*]: The information requested is given in the table. It shows levels of income support for a single pensioner *(a)* on reaching his or her 80th birthday and *(b)* on reaching pensionable age, if the illustrative income support rates shown in the technical annex to the White Paper were increased annually by 1½ per cent. in real terms from November 1985. If income support rates continued to rise in line with prices, the single pensioner rates in all cases would be £40·60 at ages up to 79 and £42·85 for those aged 80 and over.

Age in 1988	*Table numbers in the Technical Annex to the White Paper*		
	(a) *P1-P6*	*(b)* *P1, P2*	*P3-P6*
16	114	87	81
20	108	82	76
30	93	70	65
40	80	61	56

All figures are in £ per week at November 1985 prices

Maternity Units (Closure)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* all maternity units for which his approval for closure has been sought, and the dates when he expects to make his decision.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986 c. *523*]: I regret that there was an omission of words from my answer. Yorkshire regional health authority proposes the complete closure of the maternity unit at Wharfedale hospital, not the whole hospital as stated in my reply; and transfer of services to Leeds infirmary.

Young People (Drinking Patterns)

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish the findings of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys study on the drinking patterns of young people, the field work for which was carried out in 1984; and what is the reason for the delay in making the findings known.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986, c. *66*]: The main part of the fieldwork for this study was carried out in October and November 1984. The data obtained were analysed during 1985 and a report is in preparation with a view to publication by the end of the year.

Mentally Ill People

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide statistics for each of the local authority social service departments in England and Wales which indicate *(a)* the percentage of their budget spent on services for mentally ill people, *(b)* the number of day centre places they provide for mentally ill people, and *(c)* the number of approved social workers at present designated as such; how many are envisaged; and if he will make a statement on the present position regarding approved social work.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 17 February 1986, column *70*]: Budgetary information is not available in the form requested, but an indication of spending by most authorities on some services for mentally ill people is contained in the annual publication "Personal Social Services Statistics" produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. A copy is in the Library.

Information is not held centrally on the numbers of approved social workers appointed by local authorities.

The number to be appointed is for individual authorities to decide. The Department is currently discussing with other interested parties the arrangements for training and appointing approved social workers.

The table sets out the available information for England at 31 March 1985 on day centre places provided by authorities in their own centres for mentally ill people and through voluntary and other organisations. No details are available on the number of mentally ill people using places in local authority day centres catering for a mixed clientele, but on a proportionate basis we estimate about 2,400 further places are used in this way. Data for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Day centre places for mentally ill people in England at 31 March 1985

Authority	*Places in local authority day centres for mentally ill people*	*Places in centres provided by voluntary and other organisations*
Cleveland	100	360
Cumbria	6	12
Durham	0	0
Northumberland	0	0
Gateshead	35	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	140	0
North Tyneside	20	0
South Tyneside	0	0
Sunderland	24	0
Humberside	120	0
North Yorkshire	30	0
Barnsley	0	0
Doncaster	40	0
Rotherham	30	0
Sheffield	110	0
Bradford	75	0
Calderdale	0	0
Kirklees	48	0
Leeds	140	0
Wakefield	0	0
Cheshire	30	88
Lancashire	45	47
Bolton	40	0
Bury	0	0
Manchester	120	39
Oldham	50	19
Rochdale	0	0
Salford	50	0
Stockport	0	25
Tameside	0	0
Trafford	0	0
Wigan	24	0
Knowsley	70	0
Liverpool	112	120
Sefton	12	0
St. Helens	40	0
Wirral	30	0
Hereford and Worcester	190	0
Salop	20	0
Staffordshire	119	0
Warwickshire	0	139
Birmingham	120	0
Coventry	100	50
Dudley	70	0
Sandwell	50	0
Solihull	25	0
Walsall	30	30
Wolverhampton	50	0
Derbyshire	40	0
Leicestershire	85	0
Lincolnshire	32	0
Northamptonshire	0	0
Nottinghamshire	212	0
Bedfordshire	0	0
Berkshire	0	30
Buckinghamshire	0	20
Cambridgeshire	56	21
Essex	44	90
Hertfordshire	0	0
Norfolk	0	0
Oxfordshire	0	0
Suffolk	0	0
Dorset	47	57
Hampshire	50	0
Isle of Wight	60	3
Kent	20	n/a
Surrey	30	0
East Sussex	215	2
West Sussex	0	0
Wiltshire	40	0
Avon	75	154
Cornwall	0	0
Devon	30	0
Gloucestershire	0	0
Isles of Scilly	20	0
Somerset	0	0
Camden	82	N/A
Greenwich	0	1
Hackney	80	0
Hammersmith	59	0
Islington	100	0
Kensington	79	0
Lambeth	135	0
Lewisham	195	4
Southwark	85	0
Tower Hamlets	145	0
Wandsworth	65	0
Westminster	80	2
City of London	0	2
Barking	50	0
Barnet	80	1
Bexley	22	0
Brent	95	0
Bromley	0	0
Croydon	100	0
Ealing	65	0
Enfield	0	5
Haringey	30	0
Harrow	100	0
Havering	0	0
Hillingdon	30	0
Hounslow	45	0
Kingston-upon-Thames	30	N/A
Merton	51	0
Newham	165	0
Redbridge	0	0
Richmond-upon-Thames	75	0
Sutton	0	0
Waltham Forest	0	1

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 24 February 1986

WALES

Paediatric Services

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority in Wales the number of *(a)* paediatric cardiologists and *(b)* paediatric cardiac surgeons employed.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is not possible, from the information available centrally, to indentify paediatric cardiologists and paediatric cardiac surgeons within the overall totals for cardiologists and cardiac surgeons, respectively. The latest information relating to the numbers of consultants in these specialties is given in the table:

	Cardiologists		*Cardiac Surgeons*	
	Number	*Whole-time Equivalents**	*Number*	*Whole-time Equivalents**
Clwyd	—	—	1	0·1
East Dyfed	—	—	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	1	0·1
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	1	0·1
Powys	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	3	2·5	3	2·8
West Glamorgan	2	1·7	—	—

* As at 30 September 1985.

Perinatal Mortality

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of representatives from west Wales on the perinatal mortality initiative committee.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Among the 13 members of the perinatal mortality survey group appointed by my right hon. Friend are two from west Glamorgan; Dr. J. Thomas, specialist in community medicine and Miss J. Sinnott, former director of community nursing services. Members of the survey group have been appointed because of their particular expertise in the fields of maternal and neonatal care and do not represent any geographical area.

Paediatricians and Obstetricians

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority in Wales *(a)* the number of paediatricians and *(b)* the number of obstetricians employed.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information relating to consultants is given in the table below:—

	Paediatricians		*Obstertricians and Gynaecologists**	
	Number	*Whole-time Equivalents†*	*Number*	*Whole-time Equivalents†*
Clwyd	4	4·0	6	5·9
East Dyfed	6	2·3	7	3·3
Pembrokeshire	1	0·9	2	2·0
Gwent	4	4·0	7	7·0
Gwynedd	3	2·0	6	3·2
Mid Glamorgan	7	5·9	8	7·8
Powys	4	1·2	5	0·5
South Glamorgan	11	7·8	8	6·6
West Glamorgan	4	3·7	6	5·5

* Obstetricians and Gynaecologists cannot be identified separately.
† As at 30 September 1985.

There were also, at 30 September 1985, the following consultants in other identifiable paediatric specialities.

	Number	Whole-time Equivalents
Paediatric Surgery		
Clwyd	1	0·1
South Glamorgan	2	2·0
Paediatric Neurology		
South Glamorgan	1	1·0
Paediatric Dentistry		
South Glamorgan	1	1·0

ENERGY

Oil Extraction

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated value of the total oil that has been extracted from oil wells in the United Kingdom or United Kingdom territorial waters for each year since production commenced.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The value of crude oil produced on the United Kingdom continental shelf since 1975, at the average prices then ruling, is shown in the following table. Only very small quantities of oil were produced in the United Kingdom before that date. The figures represent the gross value of sales of oil and take no account of production costs.

	£ billion
1975	0·03
1976	0·65
1977	2·23
1978	2·81
1979	5·69
1980	8·85
1981	12·34
1982	14·43
1983	17·04
1984	20·59
*1985	14·80

* (1st 3 quarters).

Coal Boiler Conversion Scheme

Mr. Dormand asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much grant aid has been given to how many projects under the coal boiler conversion scheme for 1985.

Mr. David Hunt: In 1985, grant aid totalling £6·6 million in respect of 132 projects was offered under the coal firing scheme, and 16 offers of grant were rejected. In 1984, grant aid totalling £18·5 million in respect of 129 projects was offered and 53 offers were rejected.

Miners (Free Coal)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many representations he has received about the miners who were made redundant in the 1960s and who receive no free coal.

Mr. David Hunt: Under the concessionary coal payments scheme, the Government reimburse to the National Coal Board certain costs involved in the provision of concessionary coal to redundants. Since the introduction of the scheme in 1973, occasional representations have been made to successive Secretaries of State for Energy regarding retrospective application of the scheme to those made redundant in the 1960s. The Government have always made clear their view that this could not be justified.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the estimated value of the free coal allowance given to miners aged over 50 years who have been made redundant after 10 years in the industry.

Mr. David Hunt: The average annual value of coal allowance given to miners taking redundancy at age 50 or over at November 1985 prices is about £380 per person.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library the intergovernmental memorandum of understanding signed on 10 January 1984 on behalf of the British, French, Federal German, Belgian and Italian Governments on a collaborative programme for fast breeder research, development and design, together with the text of agreement subsequently entered into by the electricity supply organisation, the national nuclear organisations and fuel cycle companies of the participating countries, in pursuance of the memorandum.

Mr. Goodlad: A copy of the intergovernmental memorandum of understanding was placed in the Library at the time of my right hon. Friend's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) on 16 January 1984 at columns 47-48. Release of the texts of agreements subsequently entered into by the various organisations concerned is a matter for those organisations.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the European Commission may require action by the United Kingdom in relation to the operation and maintenance of nuclear power installations under the Euratom agreement following the completion of enquiries at the request of the European Assembly; and if he will make a statement on the position following the decision of the Assembly on 20 February to require an inquiry into Sellafield.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Prime Minister today to a closely related question. Only if it were shown that measures were needed to prevent infringement of the basic standards of radiological protection and that there were a case of urgency would the Commission have powers under article 38 of the Euratom treaty to require a member state to take measures to comply with the standards and regulations. There is no case for the Commission to take such steps in relation to Sellafield.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement on the implications for policy on renewable energy sources of the report from the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology assessing native and naturalised species of plants as such sources.

Mr. David Hunt: I have nothing to add to my reply of 24 January 1986 at columns 351-352.

Radiation

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the comparison

of radiation emerging from nuclear and coal-fired power stations, respectively, into the atmosphere; and what assessment he has made of the danger presented to the general public by each of those sources of radiation.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer to the reply given by my right hon. Friend to my hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) on 20 February 1980.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if, when he next meets the chairman of the National Coal Board, he will raise with him, in the light of the board's decision to close Bates colliery, the possibility of the board establishing in Blyth a local office of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.; and if he will make a statement;

(2) which areas of the National Coal Board do not yet have a director appointed full time for NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.; and when these vacancies are to be filled.

Mr. David Hunt: These are matters for the National Coal Board and I am asking the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Kagan Textiles Ltd.

40. **Mr. Chope** asked the Attorney-General what are the terms of the agreement between Kagan Textiles Ltd. and the Treasury regarding payment of the fine imposed in 1980 on Cellofoam (Yorkshire) Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: I shall circulate in the *Official Report* a fuller account of the circumstances of the agreement. In essence, Kagan Textiles Ltd. undertook to provide Cellofoam (Yorkshire) Ltd. with funds to pay the fine of £375,000 over an eight-year period in return for an undertaking from the Treasury not to pursue a petition to wind up Cellofoam (Yorkshire) Ltd.

Below is the fuller account—

In December 1980 Cellofoam (Yorkshire) Ltd.,, a company controlled by Lord Kagan, was fined £375,000 for various offences. The company had no resources to pay any of the fine. The Treasury Solicitor took the necessary preliminary steps towards petitioning to wind up Cellofoam. This led to an agreement whereby, in return for HM Treasury not petitioning, Kagan Textiles Ltd., which is a substantial trading company, undertook to provide Cellofoam with funds out of its future profits to enable Cellofoam to pay the fine by instalments as follows:—

1. £2,000 within 30 days of 3 October 1985.
2. £5,000 during 1986 and the same during 1987.
3. £25,000 during 1988 and the same during 1989.
4. £100,000 in each year from 1990 to 1992 inclusive.
5. The balance during 1993.

This agreement was the best that could be reached, particularly having regard to the resources and present liabilities of Kagan Textiles Ltd., and gives a reasonable prospect that the fine will eventually be paid. The only alternative would have been to proceed with the winding-up petition of Cellofoam but this would have produced nothing for the public purse and would have caused the Crown additional expense.

The first instalment of £2,000 has been paid.

Legal Aid

41. **Mr. John Morris** asked the Attorney-General how much it is proposed to save from the recently announced changes in the qualifying limits for legal aid.

The Solicitor-General: Around £7.5 million in a full year.

42. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the matters raised in the legal aid annual reports published on 23 January.

The Solicitor-General: The 35th annual reports of the Law Society and the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee were published on 23 January. The Lord Chancellor will wish to consider carefully the matters raised therein.

PRIME MINISTER

Government Achievements

Mr. Grylls asked the Prime Minister, is she will list the achievements of Her Majesty's Government since May 1983.

The Prime Minister: Since the 1983 election, the inflation rate has remained low at around 5 per cent. Gross domestic product has continued to grow steadily, with the United Kingdom now in its fifth successive year of growth, and GDP at an all-time high. In 1985, output in the United Kingdom is expected to have grown faster than all other EC countries and the United States. Investment reached a record level in 1984 and is expected to have risen by a further 4 per cent. in 1985. The balance of payments current account has continued in surplus since 1983 and has now been in surplus for six successive years. Manufacturing productivity has risen at an annual rate of 6 per cent. — higher than France or Germany — and company profitability is at its highest for two decades. Employment is rising, with around 600,000 more people in work since June 1983.

The Government have continued to maintain sound public finances. Public expenditure has been falling as a percentage of GDP since 1982-83 and is planned to fall further over the next three years. The public sector borrowing requirement in 1985-86 is forecast to account for the smallest proportion of GDP for 14 years.

The Government have pursued a substantial programme of tax reform. Business taxation has been radically restructured: by April 1986, the United Kingdom will have the lowest rate of corporation tax of any industrialised country. For income tax payers, thresholds have been raised in real terms. Further proposals for reform will be set out in the forthcoming Green Paper on personal taxation. Three taxes—the national insurance surcharge, development land tax and the investment income surcharge—have been abolished completely.

The large programme of privatisation has continued. There have been nine successful share sales since June 1983. The privatisation of British Telecom in 1984 was the world's largest ever flotation and led to a massive increase in the number of people holding shares. Several other smaller public enterprises have also been transferred to the private sector. Preparations are continuing for the sale of British Airways, the royal ordnance factories, the National Bus Company and Rolls Royce, Legislation to transfer the British Gas Corporation and the British Airports Authority to the private sector is now before Parliament and a White Paper has been published with proposals for privatisation of the water authorities in England and Wales.

Further measures have been introduced to improve the operation of markets. Incentives have been increased by

the tax changes and by the restructuring of national insurance contributions announced in the 1985 Budget. Changes in employment legislation and measures to encourage labour mobility have improved the operation of the labour market. Regulations applying to a wide field of industry and finance have been removed entirely; the small firms sector has been helped by special schemes and greater sums have been spent on training. The Government have also sought to introduce more competition in the professions.

The Government have launched a more cost-effective and job-related regional industrial policy; have backed the Alvey programme for research into advanced information technology; have set up a National Space Centre and have allocated substantial funds for the promotion of new technology.

Productivity per person in agriculture has continued to improve and has helped this sector to provide food to consumers at prices which have risen more slowly than the general price level. The volume of agricultural food and drink exports has shown a further rise of 6 per cent. in the first 18 months after the end of 1983.

Progress in tackling costly surpluses under the common agricultural policy has been made with measures in the European Community designed to control CAP spending and, specifically in the milk and wine sectors, to curb over-production. Agreements have been reached to reduce CAP support prices in real terms. In fisheries we have resolved most of our outstanding problems with Norway. Improvements have been made in the conservation of stocks and the fishing of herring in the North sea has been resumed.

The Government have developed new policies designed to achieve a better integration of environmental and agricultural objectives by encouraging farmers to maintain and enhance the landscape and nature conservation interest in their farms. Improvements in the welfare standards of livestock husbandry have been promoted, notably through the contribution of the Farm Animal Welfare Council. The Government have maintained the United Kingdom's good record of freedom from major animal disease and this remains an important priority. We have recently issued for consultation proposals to implement the COMA report, which will improve further the labelling of food for consumers.

In transport, London Transport has been transferred from the GLC to London Regional Transport, and targets set for better value for money. The revenue subsidy has been reduced by about 40 per cent. already, with no significant real increase in fares or reduction in services. Similarly, British Rail has been given targets for the reduction of subsidy and the improvement of customer service, and major new investments approved.

New initiatives have been announced to control drug misuse, and the Government supported the Video Recording Act to control video nasties. Legislation has been put through for data protection; to provide for the fourth television channel and for the Welsh fourth channel to provide a framework for the development of direct broadcasting by satellite and cable television; to set out a new framework for police powers and for handling complaints against the police, in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; and to enhance both the powers available to deal with terrorism and the safeguards for the citizen under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and to control the possession and sale of alcohol in connection with football matches. An independent Crown prosecution service for England and Wales is being established this year. Measures have been taken to ensure that the terms of imprisonment served by violent offenders fully reflect society's abhorrence of their crimes.

In education, the Government have launched a major initiative to raise standards in schools including the publication of broad curricular objectives for the five-to-16 age group, the reform of the 16-plus examination system, and the decision to introduce records of achievement for school leavers of all abilities. The technical and vocational education initiative has been introduced to boost practical elements in the 14-to-18 curriculum. The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education has been established to evaluate teacher training courses and a discussion paper on school teacher numbers and deployment in the longer term has been published. In higher education, record numbers of students have been admitted, and the Government endorsed plans which provide for a continuation of the significant shift towards science and engineering and other subjects in the public sector of higher education.

The Government have continued to be active in strengthening safeguards against fraud and in ensuring that the probity of our financial institutions is maintained without undermining their competitiveness. The Insolvency Act 1985 increased the scope for disqualifying directors of companies which have gone into liquidation or receivership, and introduced a new liability of directors for wrongful trading. The Financial Services Bill broadens the general regulatory framework within which people in financil institutions have to operate. The recommendations of the Roskill committee on the investigation, prosecution and trial of fraud cases are now before us, and we are moving towards early legislation based on them.

In the social security field, the Government have maintained the protection of social security benefits against inflation. The retirement pension is at a record real level. Legislation currently before the House builds on the Social Security Act 1985, which gave new pension rights to early leavers from pension schemes. We are providing for a major extension in occupational pensions provision and for the first time we are giving everybody a right to a personal pension of their own. In addition, the Government have completed a fundamental and far-reaching review of other social security provisions.

In the Health Service, we have continued to develop services for patients and waiting lists have fallen. NHS spending has been maintained at record levels, and the drive for better management continues with the appointment of general managers throughout the Health Service.

Over 1 million young people have entered the youth training scheme since it was launched in 1983. We are helping to train 200,000 adults this year and 250,000 next year. The community programme and enterprise allowance scheme have been expanded.

The Trade Union Act has been extending the rights of members of trades unions to influence the affairs of their unions.

In energy, Government policies on taxation and licensing have made 1984 a record year for oil and gas exploration and development in the North sea with 1985 a record year for approval of new developments. The North sea contribution to United Kingdom employment has been further expanded in both years. In 1985, flaring

was also at a record low figure. With Government support, the electricity and coal industries enabled the electricity system to withstand a year-long coal strike without power cuts and with only limited damage to the rest of British industry.

In local government, the Rates Act is protecting ratepayers from huge increases in rates in the highest spending councils. Under the Local Government Act 1985, the GLC and the metropolitan county councils will be abolished on 1 April 1986. Proposals for reform of local government finance and taxation, including the abolition of domestic rates, have recently been set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government". A committee has been established to inquire into the conduct of local authority business; and legislation has been introduced to regulate local authority publicity activities. A consultation document on increasing competitive tendering in local government has been published.

On housing, the right to buy their homes has been extended to more council tenants, discount terms have been improved for many, assistance has been provided to the owners of defective houses previously in the public sector, and an urban housing renewl unit has been set up to help local authorities to tackle the problems of their rundown estates. We are consulting on proposals to increase competitive tendering by councils.

In the environment, we have taken the initiative in Europe in bringing to an end the addition of lead to petrol and paint, and we are steadily removing it from those water supplies where it is still a problem. We have taken steps to reduce the pollution of our rivers, estuaries and beaches.

The derelict land programme has been maintained. The land register system has continued to bring about the sale and development of unused publicly owned land. A series of national garden festivals has been announced. The urban development corporations have made further progress in London docklands and Merseyside. Further enterprise zones have been designated.

In defence, the capability of our armed forces has continued to be strengthened. The Government have played their full part in implementing NATO's 1979 decision to modernise intermediate range nuclear weapons. Increased efficiency is being pursued by the continuing transfer of resources from the support areas to the frontline, and by introducing increased competition in defence contracts and promoting collaboration without international partners. A major reorganisation of the headquarters structure of the Ministry of Defence has been introduced.

The Government concluded in 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which seeks to develop further our unique relationship with the Republic of Ireland; to enhance co-operation, including over security matters, between the two countries; and also to assist in achieving lasting peace and stability within Northern Ireland. Following the approval of the agreement by the British and Irish Parliaments, the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference was established and is now pursuing its work in fields assigned to it under the agreement.

In foreign policy, the Government have maintained Britain's strong commitment to the NATO Alliance and played a leading role in the revival of the Western European Union. British Ministers and representatives have been active in building up an East-West dialogue with high-level visits in both directions and in promoting the arms control process, notably in the negotiations on chemical weapons, on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on conventional disarmament and force reductions in Europe. Within the European Community, the Government achieved a refund for 1983 of £430 million and a VAT abatement for 1984 of £600 million; negotiated a lasting settlement on budgetary imbalances, under which our future net contribution will be about half of what it might otherwise have been; and played a prominent part in the successful conclusion of the third Lomé convention and the enlargement negotiations. The Government have also been instrumental in bringing about an agreement on amendments to the EC treaties which should improve Community decision-taking while safeguarding essential United Kingdom interests. The Sino-British Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong was ratified in May last year. Over Gibraltar an agreement was reached with Spain in February 1985, and the border is now open.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton asked the Prime Minister whether she will list the achievements of Her Majesty's Government from 1979 to date.

The Prime Minister: The rate of inflation is almost half the level the Government inherited, with further falls in prospect. The United Kingdom is in its fifth successive year of growth with GDP at an all time high; and output is expected to have grown faster in 1985 than all other EC countries and the United States. Investment reached a record level in 1984 and is expected to have risen by a further 4 per cent. in 1985. The balance of payments current account has been in surplus for six successive years. Manufacturing productivity has risen at an average annual rate of 6 per cent. for the last five years—higher than France or Germany—and company profitability is at its highest for two decades. Employment is rising, with around 700,000 more people in work since March 1983.

The Government have restored sound public finances. Public expenditure has been falling as a percentage of GDP since 1982-83 and is planned to remain broadly stable at the 1984-85 level in real terms over the next three years. The public sector borrowing requirement in 1985-86 is forecast to account for the smallest proportion of GDP for 14 years.

The Government have pursued a substantial programme of tax reform. Business taxation has been radically restructured; by April 1986 the United Kingdom will have the lowest rate of corporation tax of any industrialised country. For income tax payers, the basic rate was reduced to 30 per cent. in 1979 and, since then, thresholds have been raised about 20 per cent. in real terms. Further proposals for reform will be set out in the forthcoming Green Paper on personal taxation. Three taxes — the national insurance surcharge development land tax and the investment income surcharge — have been abolished completely.

Since 1979, the Government have transferred 12 major companies and a number of other enterprises to the private sector. As a result of this policy and tax reliefs designed to encourage employee shareholding the number of individual shareowners in the United Kingdom has doubled. The privatisation programme continues to develop. By the end of this Parliament, 40 per cent. of the state-owned industrial sector we inherited in 1979 should be returned to private enterprise.

The Government have introduced a large number of measures designed to improve the operations of markets. Pay, price and dividend controls have been abolished, together with controls on foreign exchange, bank lending and hire purchase and restrictions on industrial and office development. Incentives have been increased by the tax changes and by restructuring of national insurance contributions announced in the 1985 Budget. Changes in employment legislation and measures to encourage labour mobility have improved the operation of the labour market. Regulations applying to a wide field of industry and finance have been removed entirely; the small firms sector has been helped by special schemes and greater sums have been spent on training. The Government have also sought to introduce more competition in the professions.

Productivity per person in agriculture has improved by more than 40 per cent. since 1979 and has helped this sector to provide food to consumers at prices which have fallen in relation to the level of retail prices generally. In the same period, the volume of agricultural, food and drink exports has risen by 25 per cent., and the United Kingdom now produces 80 per cent. of all the temperate foodstuffs it needs.

The task of tackling costly surpluses under the common agricultural policy has been started with measures in the European Community designed to control CAP spending and, specifically in the wine and milk sectors, to curb overproduction. Agricultural support prices have been reduced in real terms. In fisheries we achieved an advantageous settlement of a revised common fisheries policy, and we have resolved most of our outstanding problems with Norway. Improvements have been made in the conservation of stocks and the fishing of herring in the North sea has been resumed.

In transport, coach services have been opened to competition, and legislation passed to deregulate local bus services. London Transport has been transferred from the GLC to London Regional Transport, and targets set for better value for money. Similarly, British Rail has been given targets for the reduction of subsidy and the improvement of customer service, and major new investments approved. Spending on major roads has increased by 30 per cent. and over 500 miles of motorways and major trunk roads have been completed.

The Government have ensured that adequate resources are devoted to combating crime. Total manpower — police officers and civilians — in the police service in Great Britain has increased by over 17,000 since 1979. Total expenditure on the police service in England and Wales has increased from £1·1 billion in 1978-79 to £2·8 billion in 1985-86 — an increase of one third in real terms. There are nearly 3,000 more prison officers, and spending on prison building has gone up by nearly 400 per cent.

New initiatives have been announced to control drug misuse, and the Government supported the Video Recordings Act to control video nasties. An independent Crown prosecution service for England and Wales is being established this year. Measures have been taken to ensure that the terms of imprisonment served by violent offenders fully reflect society's abhorrence of their crimes.

The Government have been active to strengthen safeguards against fraud and to ensure that the probity of our financial institutions is maintained without undermining their competitiveness. The Companies Acts 1980 and 1981 strengthened powers of investigation and the courts' powers to disqualify directors for misconduct; and made insider dealing a criminal offence. The Lloyd's Act 1982 has enabled substantial progress to be made in establishing a new regulatory system at Lloyd's. The Insolvency Act 1985 increased the scope for disqualifying directors of companies which have gone into liquidation or receivership, and introduced a new liability of directors for wrongful trading. The Financial Services Bill broadens the general regulatory framework within which people in financial institutions have to operate. The recommendations of the Roskill committee to review the investigation, prosecution and trial of fraud cases are now before us, and we are moving towards early legislation based upon them.

In education, the Government have launched a major initiative to raise standards in schools, including the publication of broad curricular objectives for the five-to-16 age group, the reform of the 16-plus examination system, and the decision to introduce records of achievement for school leavers of all abilities. The technical and vocational education initiative has been introduced to boost practical elements in the 14-to-18 curriculum. In higher education, record numbers of students have been admitted and the Government has endorsed plans which provide for a continuation of the significant shift towards science and engineering and other subjects in the public sector of higher education.

In social security, the Government have maintained the protection of social security benefits against inflation. The retirement pension is at a record real level. Legislation is currently before the House building on the 1985 Social Security Act, which gave new pension rights to early leavers from pension schemes. We are providing for a major extension in occupational pension provision and for the first time we are giving everybody a right to a personal pension of their own. In addition, the Government have completed a fundamental and far-reaching review of other social security provisions.

Spending on the Health Service is up by 21 per cent. in real terms. There are many thousands more doctors and nurses. Over 40 major new hospital schemes have been completed. Many more cases are being dealt with, and waiting lists are down by 91,000. The drive for better management continues with the appointment of general managers throughout the Health Service.

Over 1 million young people have entered the youth training scheme since it was launched in 1983. We are helping to train 200,000 adults this year and 250,000 next. The community programme and enterprise allowance scheme have been expanded. Legislation has been passed extending the rights of members of trade unions to influence the affairs of their unions and to restore the balance in industrial relations between managements and unions.

In energy, Government policies on taxation and licensing have made 1984 a record year for oil and gas exploration and development in the North sea, with 1985 a record year for approval of new developments. The North sea contribution to United Kingdom employment has been further expanded in both years. With Government support, the electricity and coal industries enabled the electricity system to withstand a year-long coal strike without power cuts and with only limited damage to the rest of British industry.

In local government, the Rates Act is protecting ratepayers from huge increases in rates in the highest

spending councils. Under the Local Government Act 1985, the GLC and the metropolitan county councils will be abolished on 1 April 1986. Proposals for reform of local government finance and taxation, including the abolition of domestic rates, have recently been set out in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government". A committee has been established to inquire into the conduct of local authority business; and legislation has been introduced to regulate local authority publicity activities. A consultation document on increasing competitive tendering in local government has been published.

In housing, the Government introduced the first statutory charter of rights for public sector tenants, including the right to buy their homes. The number of home owners has increased by 2·25 million in Great Britain and owner-occupation is now 62 per cent.; the proportion of young people owning their own homes is the highest in Europe. Home improvement grants have been made more widely available than ever before. Assistance has been given to the owners of defective houses previously in the public sector and an urban housing renewal unit has been set up to help authorities tackle the problems of their rundown estates. Measures have been introduced to encourage lettings in the private sector.

In the environment, we have taken the initiative in Europe in bringing to an end the addition of lead to petrol and paint, and we are steadily removing it from those water supplies where it is still a problem. We have taken steps to reduce the pollution of our rivers, estuaries and beaches. The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was the first piece of major countryside legislation for more than a decade, and represents a significant step forward in the protection of landscape, flora and fauna.

The derelict land programme has been greatly increased. Urban development corporations have been established in London docklands and on Merseyside to bring about the redevelopment of these areas. Twenty-five enterprise zones have been designated. All these measures are having a marked impact on older urban areas in need of regeneration.

In defence, the capability of our armed forces has continued to be stengthened. The Government has played its full part in implementing NATO's 1979 decision to modernise intermediate range nuclear weapons. Increased efficiency is being pursued by the continuing transfer of resources from the support areas to the frontline, and by introducing increased competition in defence contracts and promoting collaboration with our international partners. Finally, a major reorganisation of the headquarters structure of the Ministry of Defence has been introduced.

The Government concluded in 1985 the Anglo-Irish Agreement which seeks to develop further our unique relationship with the Republic of Ireland; to enhance co-operation, including over security matters, between the two countries; and also to assist in achieving lasting peace and stability within Northern Ireland. Following the approval of the agreement by the British and Irish Parliaments, the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference was established and is now pursuing its work in fields assigned to it under the agreement.

In foreign policy, the Government have maintained Britain's strong commitment to the NATO Alliance and played a leading role in the revival of the Western European Union. British Ministers and representatives have been active in building up an East-West dialogue, with high-level visits in both directions and in promoting the arms control process, notably in the negotiations on chemical weapons, on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and on conventional disarmament and force reductions in Europe. Within the European Community, the Government were able to negotiate over £2 billion refund of contributions and a VAT abatement for 1984 of £600 million; negotiated a lasting settlement on budgetary imbalances, under which our future net contribution will be about half what it might otherwise have been; and played a prominent part in the successful conclusion of the third Lomé convention and the enlargement negotiations.

The Government have also been instrumental in bringing about an agreement on amendments to the EC treaties, which should improve Community decision-taking while safeguarding essential United Kingdom interests. Rhodesia was brought to legal independence as the Republic of Zimbabwe by the holding of the Lancaster house conference in 1979 and the supervision of the elections in 1980. The Government resoluely upheld and continue to defend the right of the Falkland Islanders to live in peace and security under a Government of their own choosing. The Sino-British Joint Declaration on the future of Hong Kong was ratified in May last year. Over Gibraltar, an agreement was reached with Spain in February 1985, and the border is now open.

Management and Efficiency

Mr. Soames asked the Prime Minister what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken since 1979 to improve the management and efficiency of the Government and Civil Service.

The Prime Minister: Since 1979, the Government have maintained their policy to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administration through the Civil Serviceand other parts of the public sector, with the aim of giving better value for taxpayer's money. We have reduced the size of the Civil Service by over 18 per cent. to 596,000—the lowest since the war. With the help of the efficiency unit set up in 1979, departments have carried out some 290 efficiency scrutinies and reviews from which savings worth over £900 million in total have already been achieved, with recurring savings now running at £295 million per year. Further significant savings are in prospect, for example from implementation of recommendations flowing from reviews of Government purchasing and accommodation.

We have initiated the lasting reform of financial management throughout Departments, so that all managers have clear objectives and responsibilities; and similar reforms of personnel development and training, including exchanges of staff between the Civil Service and outside industry, to improve management skills and performance at all levels, and to provide better arrangements for reporting and appraising staff performance so that their efficiency is monitored more keenly.

Non-departmental public bodies have also been subject to critical review and their numbers reduced by over 500 to below 1,700 in 1985. Another programme of review of the remaining NDPBs to seek progressive improvements in their performance is under way. We have also widened the opportunities for private enterprise to undertake services traditionally provided by the public sector. The Civil Service has responded well to the new demands made of it and the drive for improvement is continuing.

Small Businesses

Mr. Nicholls asked the Prime Minister, if she will list the actions taken by the Government since 1979 which were designed to, or had the effect of, assisting small businesses.

The Prime Minister: Measures introduced since 1979 include the business expansion scheme, which increases the supply of finance for investment in unquoted companies, the loan guarantee scheme and the enterprise allowance scheme, which assists unemployed people to start up their own business. In the improved climate for business there has been an increase generally in the sources of finance for small firms.

Business training is an important element in the Government's support for small firms. Through the training for enterprise programme, the Manpower Services Commission provides a range of courses to assist those starting or wishing to develop businesses. Expenditure on this will increase from approximately £14 million in 1985-86 to £20 million in 1986-87.

Since 1979 there has been a substantial increase in the number of agencies that are able to offer business advice. The Government have greatly expanded its advice and counselling to small firms through the small firms service. It has also encouraged the development of local enterprise agencies, which now number more than 300, and will be stepping up its financial support to agencies in the next financial year.

Forestry Commission (Scotland)

Mr. Adley asked the Prime Minister if she will reallocate ministerial responsibility for all Forestry Commission matters outwith Scotland; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I see no reason to change the present allocation of responsibilities.

Lower Paid (Fiscal and Social Policy)

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the relevant Departments of Her Majesty's Government's fiscal and social security policy towards the lower paid.

The Prime Minister: This is a matter of great concern, and we therefore ensure that there is close co-ordination between Departments on fiscal and social security policy towards the lower paid. A number of important measures have recently been introduced or announced. For example:

The new family credit, now before Parliament, will provide substantial extra help to low paid working families with children and will therefore improve the relationship between the income a family would receive in and out of work. It will be paid through the pay packet, in effect as an offset against tax and national insurance payments.

The planned reform of income-related benefits will end the position where the combination of tax, contributions and loss of benefits can leave individuals worse off as their gross income rises.

Successive Budgets have ensured that many of the lowest paid have been taken completely out of tax.

The reformed structure of national insurance contributions, introduced in October 1985, has relieved the burden of contributions on the low paid.

Moving the uprating date of social security benefits to April from next year will enable changes in benefits to be synchronised with changes in tax and contributions.

Together, these changes mark a major advance in co-ordinating and streamlining the systems of tax and social security. The computer systems being developed by Inland Revenue and DHSS are also designed to ensure compatibility. The scope for closer alignment in the longer term will be discussed in the forthcoming Green Paper on personal taxation.

AIDS

Mr. Mason asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement setting out all the steps being taken by Her Majesty's Government to seek to halt the spread of acquired immune deficiency syndrome, to establish causes and cures, and to educate the public and health professionals about the nature and hazards associated with the spread of the disease.

The Prime Minister: The Government have a substantial programme of action to deal with the urgent problem of acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

1. To provide a general framework, information on a number of cases in the United Kingdom is collected by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre; an expert advisory group was established at an early stage to provide expert medical advice; the Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1985 were applied to make provision to remove a person to hospital and detain them there in exceptional circumstances; advisory committees have been set up in Scotland and Wales to monitor the spread of infection and advise on measures to reduce the rate of spread; and an interdepartmental ministerial steering group co-ordinates strategy on wider issues arising from the infection.

2. To improve the safety of blood and blood products, since 1983 leaflets have been issued by the national blood transfusion service to all blood donors, warning those in at risk groups not to donate blood. Blood products for haemophiliacs are now heat-treated. £138,000 was provided for the evaluation of kits which could test blood for the presence of antibodies to the virus which leads to AIDS (HTVL III). Since October 1985, when the suitability of the kits was confirmed, all blood donations are screened and those showing such antibodies are rejected. Over £2 million extra money has been provided in Great Britain for the testing of blood samples and the screening of blood donations. Health authorities have been asked to provide facilities for tests to be undertaken outside the blood transfusion services, and for counselling for people found to be infected with the virus.

3. To deal with AIDS on a comprehensive basis, health authorities in England have also been asked to draw up plans and to send these to the Department of Health and Social Security this summer. Extra money has been allocated to north-east, north-west and south-east Thames regional health authorities, which at present treat the majority of United Kingdom AIDS cases: £680,000 in 1985-86 and £2·5 million in 1986-87. More money was also allocated to the haemophilia reference centres to provide specialist counselling services: £90,000 in 1985-86 and £270,000 in 1986-87. The Government provided £150,000 for the provision of counselling training courses for health professionals.

4. General advice and guidance has been issued, some directly from Government — for example to health professionals and to local education authorities in relation to children at school, and some from organisations assisted by Government funds such as the Health Education Council, the Haemophilia Society, the Terrence Higgins Trust and the Scottish AIDS Monitor. The Government will launch in the spring a major campaign to inform the general public about the nature of the disease and how it is spread, and have set aside £2·5 million for this purpose.

5. In research, scientists around the world are searching for a vaccine and a cure. Research in the United Kingdom on AIDS is co-ordinated by the Government funded Medical Research Council. Projects are being funded at a cost of £431,000 in total. The health Departments are contributing up to £300,000 per annum for epidemiological research on AIDS and for a new co-ordinating centre being set up by the MRC; the additional costs of this work will be met from the MRC's grant-in-aid. £125,000 has been provided for research co-ordinated by the chief scientist's office in Scotland.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister why, pursuant to the answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column 9, on Westlands, she considered the answer given on 14 February, *Official Report*, column *561*, inappropriate.

The Prime Minister: My office wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 14 February.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister (1) whether the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was aware of the likely contents of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence before extracts from the letter were read to him over the telephone on 6 January; and if she will make a statement;

(2) whether the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry discussed with his private secretary or his chief information officer the possibility of disclosing the contents of the Solicitor-General's letter to the then Secretary of State for Defence, before extracts from the letter were read to him over the telephone on 6 January; and if she will make a statement;

(3) when Sir Robert Armstrong first discussed with *(a)* her, *(b)* the then Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, *(c)* the then Secretary of State for Defence and *(d)* Mr. Bernard Ingham the letter from the Solicitor-General of 7 January to the then Secretary of State for Defence, protesting at the leak of his letter of 6 January;

(4) when and by what means the chief information officer at the Department of Trade and Industry and the press secretary at No. 10 Downing street first became aware that a letter was to be sent by the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence alleging material inaccuracies;

(5) what action Mr. Bernard Ingham understood her to want taken after receipt of the letter from the Solicitor-General to the then Secretary of State for Defence on 6 January; and what basis he had for this understanding.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the full account which I gave to the House in my statement on 23 January at columns 449-460 and in the debate on 27 January at columns 651-658.

Information Technology

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what civil funds are now available to support new colllaborative projects for research and development in advanced information technology.

The Prime Minister: A range of civil funds is available to support new collaborative projects for research and development in advanced technology.

Financial assistance is available under the Department of Trade and Industry's support for innovation scheme, the Alvey programme and under European Community programmes such as Esprit. The last two of these programmes are now almost fully committed and consideration is being given to what might succeed them.

Total estimated outturn for all forms of United Kingdom civil support for IT collaborative research in 1985-86 is £40 million. In addition, the United Kingdom receives a proportion of the funds disbursed by the European Commission under the Esprit programme of collaborative research.

Turkey

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her recent meeting with the Prime Minister of Turkey.

The Prime Minister: I had a most valuable discussion with Mr. Ozal, covering a wide range of issues, which confirmed the friendship that exists between our two countries. On Turkey's relations with the European Community, we agreed that our priority must be to revitalise the association agreement and work towards a much closer economic relationship. We also discussed Cyprus, where Mr. Ozal confirmed Turkey's support for the UN Secretary General's initiative; and the latest developments in the middle east.

I welcome the progress that Mr. Ozal's Government had made towards the restoration of parliamentary democracy and the steps taken on human rights. Mr. Ozal assured me that progress would continue.

I congratulated Mr. Ozal on Turkey's recent economic performance and welcomed our increasing trading and commercial links. I told Mr. Ozal that we had further increased our medium term export credit for Turkey. During the visit, a double taxation agreement and a memorandum of understanding, agreeing to work towards an investment promotion and protection agreement, were signed. These should further encourage investment and trade between our two countries.

Sellafield

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Prime Minister if Her Majesty's Government intend to co-operate with the inquiry into Sellafield called for by the European Assembly in terms of the Euratom agreement; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The United Kingdom Government have received no request from the Commission following the passage of resolutions by the European Parliament on 20 February relating to Sellafield. United Kingdom authorities have complied with Community requirements to provide information on environmental radiation monitoring. This information

confirmed that Sellafield has been operated in accordance with the basis standards for radiological protection laid down by the European Community.

THE ARTS

Tax Incentives

Mr. Proctor asked the Minister for the Arts if he will estimate the extent of the benefit to the Arts from reduced rates of personal and corporate taxation and the reduced rate of capital transfer tax mentioned in his answer on 20 January, *Official Report*, column 15; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: No meaningful estimate can be made, but it is reasonable to assume that where a reduction in taxation leaves people and corporations with more disposable income the arts will be likely to benefit accordingly.

Libraries (Newspapers)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Minister for the Arts if he will exercise his powers under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to obtain and publish information on the number of local authorities which have banned News International newspapers from their public libraries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: The information requested is not available and could not be obtained without disproportionate expense. However, I welcome the opportunity to make it clear that I deplore any attempt to ban particular books or newspapers for which there is a demand from public libraries, whatever the reason for such a ban. If a newspaper has been available in a public library, to meet the demands of users, then I can see no justification for ceasing to make it available in order to make a political or industrial point. I understand that the Library Association, the professional body for librarians, shares my concern at recent developments of this nature, as no doubt do many library users.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Banned Drivers

54. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many drivers have been banned from driving in each of the past three years.

Mr. Mellor: The available information relates to the number of driving licence disqualifications and is published in table 10 of Home Office statistical bulletin 28/85 "Offences Relating to Motor Vehicles, England and Wales, 1984". In 1982, 1983 and 1984 there were, respectively, about 145, 150 and 155 thousand disqualifications.

Criminal Attempts Act 1981

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has any plans to seek to amend section 7, subsection (3), of the Criminal Attempts Act 1981 to assist prosecution of shopkeepers who sell cocaine snorting kits;

(2) whether he has received any recent representations over the operation of section 7, subsection (3), of the Criminal Attempts Act 1981 with reference to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Mr. Mellor: I refer the hon. Member to what I said on this matter during the debate on the Third Reading of the Drug Trafficking Offences Bill on 18 February, at columns 220-221.

Drug Addiction

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the amount spent *(a)* by local government, *(b)* by central Government and *(c)* by other bodies on combating drug addiction in each London borough for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Mellor: Central Government expenditure in 1985-86 includes £750,000 under the DHSS funding initiative on drugs projects serving Greater London, £57,000 under the urban programme on drugs projects in London boroughs, and £183,000 under the after-care accommodation scheme on drugs projects in the inner London probation area. It is not possible to quantify separately the far larger total contribution to combating drug misuse in London made by other central Government expenditure. The other information requested is not available.

Special Constables

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to institute a formal discipline code for special constables;

(2) further to the answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *315*, what protection exists for special constables in respect of internal disciplinary cases.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The need for a discipline code for special constables has been considered from time to time. The conclusion has always been that it is neither sensible nor practicable to apply such a code to voluntary, part-time, unpaid officers and we have no present plans to introduce one. Chief officers of police are, however, recommended to follow discipline procedures for special constables which, so far as it is possible given the significant differences in status and conditions of service, are in line with those which apply to regular officers.

Ulster Defence Association

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of West Yorkshire on the progress of inquiries into, and charges arising from, the alleged illegal activities of members of extremist organisations and on the possible links between such organisations and the Ulster Defence Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Air Pistols

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received advocating an increase in controls on air pistols and similar weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received representations from about 20 hon. Members and 25 members of the

public since January 1985. Most urged that a licensing system should be introduced. On that, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 23 January, at column *436*.

Witchcraft

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received representations from chief constables about the sufficiency of police powers to counter witchcraft.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received no representations from chief constables about witchcraft.

Police Officers (Racial Discrimination)

Sir Eldon Griffiths asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he has yet received from all chief officers of police the information about allegations of racial discriminatory behaviour by police officers as requested in the circular 4/86 on this subject; and if he intends to publish them;

(2) what representations he has received from the Police Federation about his circular 4/86;

(3) if, pursuant to his circular 4/86, about allegations of racially discriminatory behaviour by police officers, he will publish in the *Official Report* a description of how statistics are compiled of cases where a suspicion of such behaviour arises.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The returns sought by Home Office circular 4/86 are intended to supplement the information about the complaints and discipline system which is already collected on an anual basis.

My right hon. Friend decided that, in order to meet expected parliamentary interest in the new offence of racially discriminatory behaviour, it was important to know what use had been made of it in forces. Not all the required returns have yet been received. Detailed statistics on complaints and discipline are published each year, and it is my right hon. Friend's intention to publish figures of the use of the new offence also.

The circular also sought information about the circumstances in which the new offence has been charged, and about the use of other disciplinary offences in regard to misconduct in which a racial element appeared to have been present. The object was to enable the Home Office to monitor the use of the new provision, having regard to the Government's stated belief that no new offence was needed in order to deal with instances of such behaviour when they came to light.

The Police Federation represented to me its anxiety that statistics of suspected racialist behaviour might give a misleading picture, and they complained that they had not been consulted on the preparation of the circular. I indicated in response that the material was being collected to facilitate the discharge of the Home Office's own responsibilities for monitoring the complaints and discipline system, and that it had not been seen as affecting the interests of federation members. But I have expressed my regret that they were not told, out of courtesy, of our plans to issue the circular.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many non-European Economic Community nationals are employed, with valid work permits, at the News Group Newspapers Limited additional printing facility at Wapping.

Mr. Waddington: This information is not recorded.

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each year since 1979, the numbers and ranks of Metropolitan police officers disciplined, demoted, suspended, dismissed from the force or required to resign following a successful civil action against the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis for a wrongful act by an officer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Action on Smoking and Health

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has provided grant-in-aid for Action on Smoking and Health; and whether any donations have been made during the past five years.

Mr. Waddington: The Home Office has never given a grant or made a donation to this organisation.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest period of time between a Minister in his Department giving a holding answer to a priority written question and the substantive answer over the last 12 months; and what is the longest similar period for such a question given a holding answer but for which a substantive answer has not yet been given; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Our records show that, over the last 12 months, the vast majority of priority written questions initially given a holding reply received a substantive answer within a month. In the same period, the longest interval between a holding reply and the substantive answer being given to a priority written question was two months and six days, and the longest period for which a substantive reply is still outstanding is seven months.

I regret that it has not yet been possible to give a substantive answer to my hon. Friend's question of 29 November. I understand that my hon. and learned Friend hopes to give a full reply within the next two weeks.

Mr. Peter William Jones

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of his recent conviction at Newport Crown court, he will make a statement on the circumstances of the release on licence in 1983 of Peter William Jones and on the assessment made at that time of the likelihood of his committing further violent offences.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Jones was sentenced to seven years imprisonment for causing grevious bodily harm on 5 March 1980, when he had already been in custody on remand for six months. He became eligible for parole on 6 January 1982 but was refused parole then and at the next

parole review. He was released on licence on the recommendation of the Parole Board on 21 November 1983, just over five months before the end of his sentence. He was recalled to prison on 13 December 1983 because he had breached the conditions of his licence. He served the rest of that sentence in prison, being released on 4 May 1984, more than a year before the current offence. The release on licence in 1983 was thus irrelevant to the offence of rape, for which Mr. Jones was sentenced to life imprisonment this month.

The decision on whether or not to release a prisoner on parole in such circumstances depends on an assessment of whether compulsory supervision by the probation service for a few months at the end of a prisoner's sentence is likely to reduce the long-term risk to the public, bearing in mind that at the end of that period the prisoner will be released into the community anyway. In Mr. Jones' case, the view was taken that the risk of re-offending would be reduced if he could overcome his drinking problem and the conditions of his licence included residence in a hostel for the treatment of alcoholics. The power to recall a prisoner who refuses to comply with the conditions of his licence and thereby benefit from supervision is an important safeguard, which was exercised promptly in this case.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animals have been used in experiments in British laboratories since 1975 in which they have been deprived of their sight, either in one eye or both; what species of animals have been used; and where these experiments are performed.

Mr. Mellor: Such experiments are not separately identified in the information collected centrally.

Sunday Trading

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations the Government have received since the publication of the report of the Auld committee; and of those how many were *(a)* for and *(b)* against the deregulation of Sunday trading.

Mr. Waddington: Since the publication of the report of the Auld committee, the Government have received 310 representations supporting and 37,317 opposing the deregulation of Sunday trading.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Boundary Commissions for England and Wales intend to conduct any interim reviews of parliamentary constituencies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The commissions have informed me that they intend to conduct interim reviews of 63 parliamentary constituencies under the powers provided in section 2(3) of the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1949. The counties and constituencies concerned are as follows:

England—Counties and Constituencies

Bedfordshire
Luton South BC
Mid Bedfordshire CC
North Luton CC
South West Bedfordshire CC

Berkshire
Reading West CC
Wokingham CC

Lincolnshire
Gainsborough and Horncastle CC
Grantham CC

Oxfordshire
Banbury CC
Oxford West and Abingdon CC
Wantage CC
Witney CC

Cheshire
Halton CC
Warrington South BC

Cleveland
Stockton North BC

Cumbria
Barrow and Furness CC
Westmorland and Lonsdale CC

Durham
Bishop Auckland CC
City of Durham CC
Easington CC
North Durhan CC
Sedgefield CC

Hertfordshire
Hertford and Stortford CC
South West Hertfordshire CC
Stevenage CC
Welwyn Hatfield CC
West Hertfordshire CC

Surrey
Esher BC
Guildford CC
Mole Valley CC
North West Surrey CC
South West Surrey CC
Woking CC

West Sussex
Arundel CC
Chichester CC
Crawley BC
Horsham CC
Mid Sussex CC
Shoreham CC
Worthing BC

Wiltshire
Salisbury CC
Westbury CC

Wales—Counties and Constituencies

Dyfed
Carmarthen CC
Ceredigian and Pembroke North CC
Llanelli CC
Pembroke CC

Gwent
Bisenau Gwent CC
Monmouth CC
Newport East CC
Newport West CC
Torfaen CC

Mid Glamorgan
Bridgend CC
Caerphilly CC
Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney CC
Ogmore CC
Pontypridd CC
Rhondda CC

Powys
Brecon and Radnor CC

West Glamorgan
Aberavon CC
Gower CC
Neath CC
Swansea East BC
Swansea West BC

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Riding Hats

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will estimate the number of riding hats imported into the United Kingdom in each of the last 10 years, showing the country of origin; what proposals he has for controlling the standards of such imported hats; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: Information relating to imports of riding hats is not separately identified in the overseas trade statistics.

Under the general safety duty proposed in the White Paper on the Safety of Goods (Cmnd. 9302) supplies of consumer goods (whether home produced or imported) will be required to ensure that their goods are safe in accordance with sound modern standards. It is proposed that the Secretary of State has the power to approve published standards as satisfying the general safety duty. British standard 6473 for riding hats appears to be suitable for this purpose. It is also proposed that trading standards officers should have power to seize or suspend unsafe goods at the point of entry into this country. The

Government intend to introduce legislation to give effect to the measure proposed in the White Paper as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Tractors

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of British tractor requirements are fulfilled by imports from overseas countries; and what percentage of these are from Czechoslovakia.

Mr. Alan Clark: In 1984, the last complete year for which data is available, imports are estimated to have accounted for 78 per cent. of the United Kingdom market for complete tractors in value terms. Two per cent. of these imports were from Czechoslovakia. In the first three quarters of 1985, the corresponding figures were 66 per cent. and 3·5 per cent. respectively.

Barrow and Birkenhead Shipyards (Privatisation)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what priority he attaches to the preservation of the present terms and conditions of employment, including pension rights, of the work force at the Barrow and Birkenhead shipyards, following the proposed privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: This is a matter for negotiation between the employers and employees. The sale of a business does not affect existing employment contracts. British Shipbuilders has however made clear that it wishes the purchasers of its warship yards to provide pension rights to company employees broadly similar to those available prior to sale.

Investments (United States)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list major United Kingdom investments in the United States of America in trade and industry over the past 10 years, together with an estimate of their value.

Mr. Alan Clark: The available information is given in table 3.1 of Business Monitor MA4 (Overseas Transactions) 1983. A list showing major United Kingdom direct investments individually cannot be provided, as this would break the confidentiality rules under which the data are collected. Information for 1984 will become available in the spring.

Wine

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) when he last met the local authority body on trading standards on matters in connection with the sales of wine in marked or lined glasses;

(2) what were the results of the two surveys which observed the extent to which the voluntary code of practice was working on the sales of wine by the glass;

(3) if, in view of the non-co-operation of the licensed trade in observing his code of conduct on the sales of wine in marked or lined glasses, he will now introduce legislation for the sale of standard quantities of wine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I last met the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards to discuss sales of wine by the glass, and other matters, on 17 January.

The main results of the surveys carried out in 1984 and 1985 by local authorities to ascertain levels of compliance with the trade's voluntary code of practice for sales of wine by the glass showed some slight improvement and were as follows:

	1984	*Per Cent.*	*1985*	*Per Cent.*
Premises Visited	4,573		5,144	
Full Compliance with Code	470	10·2	656	12·8
Compliance with the key requirements	618	13·5	831	16·9
Staff Awareness of Code	1,635	35·75	2,257	43·9
Use of Agreed Sizes	1,606	35·1	2,233	43·4

In the light of these surveys, the Department is considering whether further action is called for. The introduction of legislation to require wine to be sold by the glass only in a range of prescribed standard sizes is one of the options under consideration.

Company Accounts

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on his policy in relation to the treatment in the accounts of companies of off-balance sheet finance and window dressing.

Mr. Howard: In December, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales published a technical release dealing with the accounting issues raised by off-balance-sheet finance and window-dressing, I support the approach taken by the institute, and indeed my Department's support is recorded in the technical release.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the manufacturing trade balance of the United Kingdom with the 10 members of the European Economic Community in 1985, stating value of exports, imports and the balance for each country, if possible on a balance of payments basis.

Mr. Alan Clark: Statistics of United Kingdom trade with individual countries are not available on a balance of payments basis. Figures on the overseas trade statistics basis are in the table.

For comparison, both OTS and BOP figures are given for United Kingdom trade with the European Community as a whole.

United Kingdom trade in manufactures 1985
£ million. OTS basis

Trade with	*Exports (FOB)*	*Imports (CIF)*	*Crude balance*
France	3,877	5,113	−1,236
Belgium/Luxembourg	2,552	3,070	−519
Netherlands	3,084	3,833	−749
Federal Republic of Germany	5,755	11,535	−5,780
Italy	2,284	3,675	−1,391
Irish Republic	2,227	1,679	+548
Denmark	806	828	−21
Greece	277	111	+166
European Community (sum of the above)			
OTS basis	20,863	29,844	−8,981
BOP basis	20,571	28,788	−8,218

Source: UK Overseas Trade Statistics Department of Trade and Industry.

BL (Privatisation)

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he first became aware of the letter from Hill Samuel & Co., dated 14 February, concerning a time limit on offers to purchase Leyland Vehicles Land Rover and Freight Rover.

Mr. Channon: I first became aware of the letter on 19 February.

Mr. Straw asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether there was any prior consultation between Her Majesty's Government on the one hand and British Leyland and Hill Samuel & Co. on the other concerning the setting of a time limit for the receipt of offers to purchase Leyland Vehicles Land Rover and Freight Rover.

Mr. Channon: There was prior consultation about the time frame in which parties should be asked to indicate firm intentions to make offers, but not about the precise date by which these should be requested.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he first saw the letter of 14 February regarding deadlines for the sale of British Leyland.

Mr. Channon: I first saw the text on which this letter is based on 19 February, after I answered the private notice question from the right hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith).

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when discussions on the possible sale of Leyland Vehicles to General Motors commenced; who is carrying out the negotiations on behalf of Leyland Vehicles; who negotiated the assurances regarding employment and import content which he has given to the House; at what stage of the negotiations he expects the relevant trade unions to be consulted; and what role General Motors World Truck is playing in the talks.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government made a preliminary approach to General Motors in mid-1984 to establish whether, in principle, they would be interested in exploring with BL the possibility of a joint approach to the problems of the United Kingdom commercial vehicle industry. Following detailed studies carried out by the two companies, it was agreed in the autumn of 1985 that substantive talks should begin directed at the possible acquisition by General Motors of various parts of Land Rover-Leyland.

BL has been responsible for the conduct of the commercial discussions, although the Government have been represented at the talks. The General Motors delegation has been led by representatives of the General Motors Truck and Bus Group. Government officials are, however, primarily responsible for the discussions taking place with General Motors on the question of assurances regarding the future of the relevant Land Rover-Leyland business under General Motors ownership.

I know that both General Motors and BL recognise this is a very uncertain and worrying time for their work forces and are doing their utmost to keep them informed. I am myself also meeting trade union delegations to explain the position.

EC (Internal Market)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what he expects to be the effect of completing the European internal market on *(a)* the structure of British industry, *(b)* the level of unemployment in the United Kingdom, *(c)* the level of British exports to the European Economic Community, *(d)* the level of British imports from the European Economic Community, *(e)* the United Kingdom's balance of payments and *(f)* the rate of growth of the British economy.

Mr. Alan Clark: Progress towards completing the internal market will be one of a number of factors influencing the development of the British economy. In general, removing barriers to trade within the Community should further increase our trade with other member states and reduce costs to business. It should therefore help to stimulate increased efficiency in the use of resources and accordingly encourage growth of the economy.

Jade Pot Plant

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will take steps to ban the pot plant commonly known as Jade in view of its known poisonous properties.

Mr. Howard: No. The National Poisons Centre advises me that house plants are not a significant health hazard and that it is very rare for children swallowing them to suffer serious or lasting harm.

National Accreditation Mark

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what consultations, and with whom, took place on the design of the national accreditation mark; and whether the advice of the National Accreditation Council was sought before the mark was adopted.

Mr. Butcher: The design of the national accreditation mark was chosen by the Department of Trade and Industry following consultations with the Lord Chamberlain's Office and on the basis of advice received from the Department's legal advisers. The National Accreditation Council was informed of the choice before the mark was publicised, but its advice was not formally sought.

Paraquat

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will impose new safety conditions under which paraquat is exported to third world countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February, c. *269*]: The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations last year adopted an international code of practice on the distribution and use of pesticides. I regard this as an effective means of drawing the attention of both industry and governments to the measures needed to assure the safety of pesticide users.

Turkey

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what financial and other support he is giving to British manufacturers wishing to further commercial relations in Turkey.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February, c. *357*]: Official export services, including ECGD cover and other financial assistance schemes, are available to British firms wishing to do business with Turkey. I hope that commercial relations will be strengthened following contacts between British and Turkish businessmen during the Turkish Prime Minister's visit and by the fothcoming visit by the Under-Secretary of State for the Treasury and Foreign Trade.

Mr. Jim Spicer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about progress on Turkish fabric manufacturers' recent commercial initiatives aimed at redressing the balance of textiles trades between Turkey and EEC countries; and what plans he has for developing these initiatives.

Mr. Alan Clark [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 February, c. *357*]: I welcome the recent voluntary restraint agreement on textiles between Turkey and the European Community. The level of imports of the products subject to restraint will be monitored carefully. I hope that this agreement can be extended to cover sensitive clothing products in a comprehensive agreement. Discussions on such an extension are continuing.

ENVIRONMENT

Thames Water Authority

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on steps being taken by the Thames water authority to employ all employees of the Greater London council currently concerned with the Thames barrier, land drainage, and other services which the authority will operate from 1 April next.

Mr. Tracey: This is a matter for the Thames water authority.

Sellafield

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Irish Government regarding the effect of radioactive discharges; what action he has taken following these; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: At the request of the Irish Government, a meeting of officials took place on 14 February. Information about discharges from Sellafield, including the recent incidents, was supplied and consideration was given to improving procedures for notifying the Irish Government of such incidents.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what accidents have been reported at the Sellafield plant so far in the current year; what has been the radioactive discharge or leak involved; what effect he estimates this will have on levels of radioactivity in the south west of Scotland; and what action he proposes to take.

Mr. Waldegrave: Three incidents involving radioactivity have been reported to the Secretary of State this year. One involved the discharge of about 500 kg of uranium to the sea; one involved a very small quantity of plutonium vapour entering the atmosphere and the third resulted in no discharge to the environment. Present indications are that levels of radioactivity in the south-west of Scotland have not been affected.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his reply of 11 February to the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), *Official Report*, columns 397-8, he will list the assets so far identified for sale in order to create the new charitable trust for London.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: This will be a matter for the London Residuary Body to consider.

Action on Smoking and Health

Mr. Macfarlane asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if his Department or the Sports Council provides grant-in-aid for Action on Smoking and Health; and whether any donations have been made to this organisation.

Mr. Tracey: No.

Grants (Wolverhampton)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what grants have been allocated by his Department to Wolverhampton borough council during the last four years for housing improvement projects; and what spending constraints have been imposed on the council during the same period.

Sir George Young: The Department does not allocate grants to local authorities for housing improvements. They are given by local authorities as part of their capital expenditure programmes on housing. Each year the Secretary of State determines for individual authorities a housing investment programme allocation for capital expenditure on housing. Authorities may spend up to the allocation specified and supplement it by using the prescribed proportion of capital receipts. The Secretary of State does not specify how the available resources should be spent; it is for each authority to determine its own priorities within its housing strategy as a whole.

Allocations and expenditure by Wolverhampton borough council over the last four financial years are as follows:

Financial year	HIP allocation £ million	*Expenditure £ million	Expenditure on home improvement grants £ million
1982-83	16·649	16·603	3·635
1983-84	14·603	22·392	4·862
1984-85	12·211	25·938	4·731
1985-86	9·958	†15·239	†4·300

* Includes use of capital receipts.
† Estimate.

Inner City Areas (Grants)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money has been set aside by his Department since 1981 for grants for projects in deprived inner city areas; and whether he will take steps to encourage inner city councils to submit claims for the £100 million set aside by his Department which has so far not been claimed.

Sir George Young: A wide range of programmes sponsored by my Department and by other Departments support projects in deprived inner city areas. The allocations for the urban programme for each of the years 1981-82 to 1985-86 were £215 million, £270 million, £348 million, £348 million and £338 million. It is not the case that £100 million of these resources remains unclaimed. Resources are reallocated during the year within the urban programme itself, and to other programmes within the urban block—derelict land grant and urban development corporations—to achieve the most effective pattern of capital expenditure in the inner cities. £87 million of resources were reallocated in this way over the last three years. Only £14 million, or some 1·5 per cent. of a total resource provision of £1,034 million was unspent over the same period.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Butter

Mr. Redmond asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what tonnage of butter was stored at the EEC intervention store at Kirk Sandall each year since 1978; at what annual running cost; at what price per tonne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The following is the information for the years in which stocks have been held.

1 January	Tonnes	Value at then current purchase price (£ per tonne)
1979	700	1,458·48
1983	110	2,110·65
1984	1,230	2,159·90
1985	2,230	1,929·58
1986	2,750	1,890·35

Storage costs at individual stores are not given on grounds of commercial confidentiality, but the average annual cost is £71·76 per tonne.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Marek asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the length of agreements made between his Department and farmers proposed for environmentally sensitive areas; whether the payments will fully take into account inflation on a yearly basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Fishery Protection

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing how many boardings by the United Kingdom fishery protection seaborne vessels took place on each day in January; in which area; and what was the nationality of the vessel boarded.

Mr. Gummer: The number of boardings by United Kingdom fishery protection seaborne vessels for each day in January 1986, by ICES area and nationality of vessels boarded, are as follows:

Date	Nationality of Vessel Boarded	North Sea ICES Area			West of Scotland ICES Area		Irish Sea ICES Area	Eastern Channel ICES Area	Western Channel ICES Area	South Western Approaches ICES Area			All
		IVa	IVb	IVc	VIa	VIb	VIIa	VIId	VIIe	VIIf	VIIh	VIIj	
3 January 1986	United Kingdom				1								1
4 January 1986	Spain										2		2
5 January 1986	Eire				1								4
	Netherlands		2										2
	United Kingdom		1				2						3
7 January 1986	France	3							3				6
	Spain										2		2
8 January 1986	Belgium			1									1
	Denmark	1							1				2
	France								1				1
	Netherlands			1									1
	Spain										1		1
	United Kingdom	3							3				6
9 January 1986	Belgium		1										1
	Netherlands		2										2
13 January 1986	United Kingdom	3											3
14 January 1986	United Kingdom								2				2
15 January 1986	Spain	1									2		3
	United Kingdom	1											1
16 January 1986	Denmark								1				1
	United Kingdom								4				4
17 January 1986	Belgium									2			2
	France				1				3				4
	Netherlands		4										4
	United Kingdom	3			1								4
19 January 1986	Faroese				1								1
	Netherlands				1								1
	United Kingdom		1		3								4
23 January 1986	United Kingdom		1						1				2
24 January 1986	United Kingdom								1				1
25 January 1986	France								1				1
	Spain										3		3
	United Kingdom				3								3
26 January 1986	France							2					2
	Netherlands							1					1
	Spain											3	3
	United Kingdom								6				6
27 January 1986	Belgium							2					2
	United Kingdom	1	2						1				4
28 January 1986	France							1					1
	Netherlands							2					2
	Spain										3		3
	United Kingdom				1			2					3
29 January 1986	United Kingdom				5								5
30 January 1986	United Kingdom				1				2				3
31 January 1986	United Kingdom	1											1

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

The Gambia

46. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development assistance he is providing to the Gambia.

Mr. Raison: In the present financial year we expect to spend about £5 million on programme aid, project aid and technical co-operation. Much of the assistance is designed to complement the efforts of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in helping the Gambia implement an economic recovery programme. In addition we organised a meeting of donors in London last September.

Overseas Students

51. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total sum provided by his Department in 1984-85 to assist students from developing countries to obtain qualifications in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Raison: £64·7 million. About two thirds of those coming here to study were on courses leading to formal qualifications.

Debt

52. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what studies his Department is making of the efforts of debt servicing and repayment on the development of poor countries.

Mr. Raison: We regularly review all aspects of the economic problems faced by poor countries, including debt service and repayment. Debt problems are an important element in our discussions with aid recipients.

Drought (Sub-Saharan Countries)

53. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what programmes he is supporting to evaluate and alleviate the long-term effects of drought on refugees in the sub-Saharan countries.

Mr. Raison: The programmes of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross contain elements which are designed for this purpose. We make substantial contributions to these organisations: £9·8 million so far in the financial year 1985-86 for their Africa appeals.

As agreed in 1984 at the second international conference on assistance to refugees in Africa we are also providing £5 million towards infrastructure projects.

In addition, our bilateral aid to agriculture and other natural resources in Africa is designed to mitigate the effects of drought.

Donations

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list, for each of the last 10 years, the amount of public money received by each of the following organisations: the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development, the Catholic Institute of International Relations, Christian Aid, Christians Aware, the Church Missionary Society, the Methodist Missionary Society, One World Week, the Scottish Churches Action for World Development, the Shaftesbury Project Overseas Aid and Development Group, the United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, War on Want and the World Development Movement.

Mr. Raison: The information sought cannot all be provided as it is not held centrally and collecting it would involve disproportionate time and cost. For the organisations listed, those grants which can be readily identified from the material assembled for preparing the overseas aid vote supply Estimates are as follows:

	Catholic Fund for Overseas Development	*Catholic Institute for International Relations*	*Christian Aid*
	£	£	£
Outturn:			
1979-80	50,000	131,718	200,000
1980-81	75,000	183,386	250,000
1981-82	90,000	255,856	300,000
1982-83	100,000	322,132	330,000
1983-84	100,000	432,438	337,000
1984-85	300,000	535,610	700,000
Provision sought:			
1985-86	350,000	619,500	1,000,000

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Student Grant

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will show the value in real terms in 1985-86 of the basic student grant available to undergraduate students for 1961-62.

Mr. Walden: In 1961-62, the maintenance grant for a student living outside London in lodgings was £265, and in college or hall accommodation £280. Revalued to 1985-86 prices, these rates are £1,953 and £2,063 respectively.

Religious Education

Mr. Gregory asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received since publication of Her Majesty's Inspectors' report on a "Survey of Religious Education in Years 4 and 5 of the Secondary School".

Mr. Chris Patten: None.

GCSE Examination

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he last discussed the introduction of the GCSE with representatives of the National Association of Head Teachers.

Mr. Chris Patten: My. right hon. Friend discussed school examination matters with representatives of the National Association of Head Teachers on 26 July 1984.

National Union of Students

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what subjects he discussed at his last meeting with the representatives of the National Union of Students.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend last met NUS representatives to discuss student financial support on 3 December 1984. I last met them on 12 February to discuss the level of grant and the effect of the proposed changes in social benefits.

Schools (Independence)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will investigate the possibility of giving each local education authority school more financial and educational independence.

Mr. Dunn: The Education Bill currently before Parliament makes provision to remove local education authority domination of governing bodies and to strengthen the parents' voice; and to enhance the governing body's role in all aspects of a school's life and work. These more balanced governing bodies will, in partnership with the local education authority and head

teacher, have significant powers in respect of finance and in determining their schools' main policies and lines of development.

Overseas Students

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on recommendations affecting his Department's responsibility contained in "Containing Crisis: the Response to Overseas Student Groups in Hardship", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend is considering those recommendations in "Containing Crisis" which relate to his areas of responsibility, but is not yet able to make a statement. The report is to be discussed later this month by representatives of Government Departments and other organisations concerned at the fourth "round table" meeting on matters concerning overseas students, to be chaired by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

Royal College of Music

Mr. St. John-Stevas asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposal he is currently considering for changes in the structure of the Royal College of Music; what consultations he has had on the matter; and what representations he has received in support of such proposals.

Sir Keith Joseph: I have received proposals from the Royal Academy of Music for its future academic development involving a restructuring of courses and a reduction in the number of its students. I have held meetings about the training of talented young musicians with leading figures in the music world and with the heads of the music colleges at which these and other possible proposals were discussed.

Physics Teaching

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what conveniently available figures he has for the number of physics teachers' posts occupied by non-physicists.

Mr. Chris Patten: The latest available information is from a survey of a sample of maintained secondary schools in England carried out by this Department in 1984. It is estimated that there were then some 12,600 full-time teachers teaching physics. Seventy per cent. of these teachers had a higher education qualification including physics although not all had it as the main subject of a degree. The remaining 30 per cent. were responsible for 17 per cent. of tuition in the subject: the majority of these teachers had a higher education qualification in chemistry, engineering or general science.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many graduate physicists have applied to enter teacher training colleges for 1986; and what conveniently available comparative figures he has for 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: By 12 February, 245 applications to PGCE physics courses commencing this autumn had been received by the graduate teacher training registry. Totals for the corresponding dates in 1983, 1984 and 1985 were 521, 538 and 345 respectively. From September 1986 through the Department's bursary scheme, a tax-free sum of £1,200 in addition to the normal grant will be paid to encourage students to enter PGCE courses in physics as well as in mathematics and CDT.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the shortage of physics teachers; and on what basis his estimate was made.

Mr. Chris Patten: The most recent data supplied by local authorities indicate that 109 posts for physics teachers were unfilled in January 1985, while 11 newly trained teachers of the subject were known to be unemployed and still seeking a teaching post. The secondary staffing survey of 1984 indicated some improvement in the proportion of tuition by staff not qualified in the subject, at a time when physics slightly increased its share of the total timetable. However, the 1984 survey still showed an estimated 17 per cent. of physics tuition as being undertaken by teachers without a qualification in the subject, and the Government are aware of evidence that this proportion may be rising again. We ae also concerned about the recent shortfall in recruitment to initial training courses in physics, and the undoubted impact this will have on the output of newly trained teachers seeking posts in maintained schools.

Falling Rolls

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what financial savings have arisen from the closure of schools following from his Department's circular 2/81, "Falling Rolls and Surplus Places".

Sir Keith Joseph: The information is not collected by the Department. However 855,000 surplus places have been removed since 1975. This has enabled local education authorities to make significant savings on teaching and non-teaching costs, and an Audit Commission calculation, repriced to 1985-86, indicates that at least £25 million might be saved for every 100,000 surplus secondary school places taken out of use.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the implications of unclassified research as a basis for undergraduate and postgraduate teaching for encouragement of collaboration under the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Walden: It is widely accepted that teaching in higher education can benefit from a close association with research. In "A Strategy for Higher Education in the 1990s" (September 1984) the University Grants Committee says:

"able young students receive a unique stimulus from being taught by those engaged in extending the frontiers of their disciplines."

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what discussions have been held with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals on the matter of university participation in the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Walden: Officials in the Department have had a preliminary discussion with the Secretary General of the

committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals over the arrangements to enable universities to submit proposals for participation in SDI research projects.

Russian Language Teaching

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of courses of Russian which have been terminated at universities or polytechnics in each of the last seven academic years.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of universities and colleges of London university listed in the Universities Central Council on Admissions handbook of undergraduate courses as no longer offering courses in Russian or Russian studies, and the numbers offering new courses in each academic year since 1979-80 are as follows:

	Russian courses no longer on offer	*New Russian courses*
1979-80	3	—
1980-81	—	1
1981-82	3	1
1982-83	—	1
1983-84	4	—
1984-85	—	—
1985-86	2	—

There was no change in the numbers of polytechnic courses in Russian during this period.

Scientific Research

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of applications which have been submitted to his Department during the last seven years for scientific research; and what proportion of such applications has been rejected.

Mr. Walden: Educational research apart, the Department does not directly fund scientific research in the way implied. Thus no such applications, other than for funding of educational research, have been submitted to the Department over the past seven years.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what resources he intends to make available to universities and polytechnics to enable them to raise their levels of provision for modern equipment in scientific laboratories.

Mr. Walden: For the universities funded through the University Grants Committee, my right hon. Friend announced on 12 November, at columns 107-108, that in addition to the £4 million made available in the current year, he would be providing £30 million over the three years 1986-87 to 1988-89 to increase the amount available for the improvement of equipment in selected branches of research. This is on top of the general equipment grant for the universities, which for the academic year 1986-87 will be £95·1 million, the separate provision for equipment for the engineering and technology programme—about £9 million over the financial years 1985-86 to 1987-88—and provision by the Computer Board of £15·2 million in the 1986-87 financial year.

For the polytechnics, it is for the relevant local education authority to determine within the total prescribed expenditure allocation for all capital spending heads in the authority how much should be spent on FE equipment. However, an additional £2·3 million is being made available over 1986-87 and 1987-88 to provide for the associated equipment costs of the eight polytechnics participating in the engineering and technology programme.

Drugs

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what consultations he proposes to have with local education authorities and with representatives of the National Association of Head Teachers about establishing in school curricula long-term anti-drugs education programmes.

Mr. Dunn: I shall be meeting representatives from the National Association of Head Teachers later this week to discuss its recent memorandum on drug abuse and other issues arising.

The Health Education Council is preparing curriculum material on drug misuse which will become available for teachers and teacher trainers later this year. Local authority staff, appointed with funding from education support grant, will also be well placed to develop local programmes.

Politically Controversial Issues

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in response to the draft statement of principles and draft circulars to local authority associations, teachers' organisations, churches and voluntary bodies on how teaching staff should approach politically controversial issues in schools and colleges.

Mr. Chris Patten: Consultation was initiated only as recently as 4 February: it is therefore too early for the great majority of those consulted to reply.

Midday Supervision (Wolverhampton)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations have been made to his Department by the Wolverhampton education authority about supervision of school pupils at midday; and what response he has given to those representations.

Mr. Dunn: No representations have been received from the Wolverhampton education authority.

Engineering and Technology

Mr. Bright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what additional assistance is being made available by industry to the universities and polytechnics included in the engineering and technology programme.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government are heartened by the impressive response of industry to the engineering and technology programme. An estimated £24 million of costed assistance related to provision under this programme is being made available directly by industry —and in addition there is evidence of other help which has not been costed. Particular forms of assistance include donation of equipment; loan of staff for part-time teaching; additional student sponsorships; and training places in firms.

In the light of the industrial support which has been forthcoming, the Government has now confirmed earlier conditional allocations to all universities and polytechnics in phase 2 of the programme.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Co-operative Action

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what co-operative action in both parts of the island of Ireland, other than between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana, have been taken in accordance with article 2*(b)* of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Scott: Apart from co-operative action taken between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana, no such action has been taken in accordance with article 2*(b)*.

Local Authorities and Public Bodies

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the effect of the operation on local authorities and other public bodies of the current abstention from participation of the Unionist parties.

Mr. Needham: 18 district councils with Unionist majorities have adjourned in protest at the Anglo-Irish agreement and have delegated certain functions to the clerks. So far this has caused no major disruption to local authority services. However, it appears that these councils may not meet to make a rate for 1986-87. Failure to do so would mean that from 1 April 1986 the councils would not have enough money to ensure the delivery of local authority services.

Public bodies have not been seriously affected by the abstention of Unionist members.

Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) when he proposes to establish a working group of officials to consider the machinery for further discussion of legal matters, including the administration of justice, referred to at the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 11 December 1985;

(2) what representations have been made to the Government of the Republic of Ireland on policy aspects of extradition and related matters as referred to at the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference dated 10 January.

Mr. Scott: At the meeting my right hon. friend the Secretary of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and I had with the then Irish Minister for Justice and the Irish Attorney-General on 13 February, further work by officials on matters of mutual concern in accordance with the terms of article 8 of the agreement was authorised. These include measures relating to extradition; the possible harmonisation of areas of the criminal law; and the search for measures to enhance public confidence in the administration of justice.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations have been received from the international community in support of the Anglo-Irish agreement; and what specific offers have been made for financial assistance for economic development in Northern Irish areas which have suffered from the consequences of the recent instability.

Mr. Scott: Following the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement on 15 November last year, public messages of welcome were sent by the Governments of the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Japan, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, Sweden, Denmark and Greece and by the European Commission, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

While United Kingdom and Irish Republic officials have been involved in discussions with representatives from various parts of the international community, no formal proposals have yet been made.

Police Complaints Procedure

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the responses he has received on the police complaints procedure, as referred to in the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: It is not our normal practice to publish responses received in respect of consultation papers. We do not intend to do so in the case of the paper on the reform of the police complaints procedures. Full account will be taken of the views of all those who responded to the consultation paper and other interested parties, in drafting the necessary legislation. We intend to publish a proposal for a draft Order in Council later this year. Interested parties will have a further opportunity to comment on the Government's proposals at that stage.

Gaelic Street Names

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to reach a decision on proposals to introduce Gaelic street names into Northern Ireland in accordance with proposals put to him during the course of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 11 December 1985.

Mr. Scott: Views and proposals on the position of the Irish language in Northern Ireland were put forward by the Irish side at the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 10 January 1986. We are considering them. We shall also consider the views of other interested parties expressed outside the conference.

Mr. Bell asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations have been made by outside bodies concerning the proposals to introduce Gaelic street names into Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The Government have received representations on the use of Irish street names from various individuals and groups including Newry and Mourne district council, Derry city council and the West Belfast committee of Glor na nGael.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he is undertaking consultations with appropriate bodies in the Province concerning the possible application of the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Service, Consultation and Representation) Bill to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: No. It would not be appropriate for Northern Ireland to be included in the scope of this Bill.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what subsidy his Department was asked to make when Harland and Wolff tendered for an order for an air training ship and for British Petroleum's single well oil production system; and how these figures compared with the size of the subsidy actually paid in each case.

Dr. Boyson: No subsidy was either sought or provided for the aviation training ship. Details of assistance for the British Petroleum single well oil production system order are regarded as commercially confidential.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Income Tax

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated cost to the Exchequer in a full year of changing the income tax system so that there was a starting rate of 25 per cent. on the first £1,000 of taxable income and the rates were then set at 30 per cent., 35 per cent., 40 per cent., 45 per cent. and 50 per cent., respectively, with the rates above 30 per cent. being reached at the threshold of taxable income currently associated with that of the 40 per cent., 45 per cent., 50 per cent., and 55 per cent. rates, respectively.

Mr. Moore: The direct revenue cost would be about £1·8 billion in a full year at 1986-87 levels of income, compared with an indexed income tax regime.

Bank of England

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what basis he *(a)* makes statements in the House and *(b)* answers parliamentary questions on activities of the Bank of England in giving guarantees and making loans from funds other than those provided by Parliament; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The Bank of England gives guarantees and makes loans in the day to day course of its ordinary banking business, relying on its own resources. Any questions are a matter for the Bank of England, not my right hon. Friend the Chancellor. As I indicated to the hon. Member on 25 November 1985 at columns *466-7*, it is for the Bank of England to determine its policy on answering such questions, constrained among other things by customer confidentiality.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Moate asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the implications of the decision to proceed with a fixed Channel link for his policy towards the creation of enterprise zones in Kent and in particular, the Isle of Sheppey.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government will be prepared to consider any evidence that action needs to be taken in relation to employment in particular locations in Kent. However, the link is unlikely to affect employment adversely in Kent as a whole.

Takeaway Food (VAT)

Mr. Irving asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received from the takeaway food industry since the imposition of value added tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have recently met two deputations led by hon. Members to discuss the effect of VAT on takeaway food and a small number of letters has also been received.

Mr. Irving asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of imposing value added tax on the takeaway food industry; and what has been the revenue from this taxation to the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: It is not possible to isolate and evaluate separately the effects of imposing value added tax on hot takeaway food and drink from those of other changes, such as trends in consumers' tastes, fluctuations in the price of raw materials, and the consequences of competition in the industry.

Value added tax paid in respect of that takeaway food and drink is not separately identified in Customs and Excise accounts, nor is it possible to produce a reliable estimate from consumers expenditure data, since the latest survey information relates only to 1984, when expenditure patterns were distorted by the immediate effects of imposing value added tax.

Unemployment (Costs)

Mr. Woodall asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give an estimate of the average cost to the Exchequer, in the current financial year 1985-86, of the extra unemployed persons, taking into account the cost of social security benefits and loss of revenue from direct and indirect taxation.

Mr. MacGregor: The estimated cost of social security benefits paid in respect of unemployment in 1985-86 is £6,650 million, to an estimated 2,735 thousand beneficiaries—about £2,400 per beneficiary. It is not possible to estimate the tax revenue forgone.

Companies (Employee Ownership)

Mr. Murphy asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on the further encouragement of wider employee ownership in companies via incentive schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Moore: We have received a variety of representations. They mainly relate to particular aspects of the measures the Government have introduced to encourage wider employee share ownership, which have been warmly welcomed.

Public Spending

Mr. Forman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out in tabular form the change in the percentage

shares of public spending in the United Kingdom by economic category from 1978-79 to 1985-86 and as projected to 1988-1989.

Mr. MacGregor: The table expresses the figures by economic category shown in table 2.10 of the 1986 public expenditure White Paper, as percentages of the planning total excluding the reserve, central privatisation proceeds and the adjustments which cannot be allocated to economic category. Figures prior to 1980-81 are not readily available.

Spending by Broad Economic Category

	1980-81 outturn	*1981-82 outturn*	*1982-83 outturn*	*1983-84 outturn*	*1984-85 outturn*	*1985-86 estimated outturn*	*1986-87 plans*	*1987-88 plans*	*1988-89 plans*
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Departmental running costs	8·6	8·6	8·6	9·3	9·1	9·2	9·5	9·7	9·7
Running costs receipts	−1·6	−1·7	−1·7	−2·3	−2·3	−2·4	−2·4	−2·5	−2·5
Other public sector pay	27·3	27·2	26·9	26·6	26·3	26·1	26·0	26·0	25·9
Transfers to the personal sector	30·4	32·6	34·3	35·1	34·5	35·5	36·0	36·2	36·6
Purchases of goods and services	23·7	22·3	23·0	23·2	23·5	24·1	24·4	24·6	24·5
Transfers to the corporate sector	10·8	10·0	7·3	6·2	6·9	5·7	4·7	3·8	3·7
Payments overseas	0·9	1·0	1·6	1·9	2·0	1·9	1·8	2·2	2·1

Living Standards

Sir Adam Butler asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount by which the person currently on average earnings has changed his standard of living, measured by the percentage increase in earnings over the increase in retail prices, since May 1979.

Mr. Lawson: After adjusting for the change in retail prices, average earnings increased by 14 per cent. between May 1979 and December 1985. When changes in income tax and national insurance contributions are also taken into account, the increase in real average earnings after tax was 16 per cent.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of tax units (households) are paying, less income tax and national insurance contributions, as a proportion of gross earnings in 1985-86 than in 1978-79

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Superannuation (Reckonable Service)

Mr. Stott asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish an actuarial statement of the cost of implementing the reckonability of former unestablished service in the General Post Office, prior to the 1969 Act, for superannuation purposes.

Mr. Brooke: Unestablished service in the Post Office after 14 July 1949 reckons in full for superannuation purposes. An estimate of the cost of allowing unestablished service before that date to reckon in full, including the cost of arrears of pension and increased lump sums, is not available. If no arrears of pension were paid to those who have already retired and there is no change in the basis of calculating lump sum retirement benefits, it has been estimated that the total cost over 25 years would be of the order of £70 million. Such an improvement would, however, have to be extended to the Civil Service and costs would then rise to the order of £550 million over 25 years.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the level of tax reliefs granted for life assurance, mortgage interest, approved pension schemes, employers' contributions to approved pension schemes, retirement annuity and age allowance for each year since 1979; and what has been the annual percentage increase in each case and the total percentage increase 1979-85 in each case.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *593*]: The information is as follows. The figures represent the reduction in tax liabilities resulting from the existence of the reliefs.

Direct Revenue Cost of Relief

	*Life assurance**	*Mortgage interest*	*Approved pension schemes‖*	*Employers' contributions to funded pension scheme¶*	*Retirement annuity premiums●*	*Age allowance■*
					(£ million	*(£ million)*
1978-79	260	1,110	450	1,200	70	265
1979-80	430	1,450	500	1,400	110	290
1980-81	530	1,960	700	1,600	..	370
1981-82	520	2,030	1,000	1,800	..	390
1982-83	570	2,150	1,100	1,850	..	450
1983-84	690	†2,750	1,400	1,900	..	490
1984-85	710	3,500	1,750	1,950	..	520
1985-86	640	4,750	..	..	325	425

	Life assurance*	Mortgage interest	Approved pension schemes‖	Employers' contributions to funded pension scheme¶	Retirement annuity premiums●	Age allowance■
Change over previous year						
					(Per cent.)	(Per cent.)
1979-80	65	31	11	17	57	9
1980-81	23	35	40	14	..	28
1981-82	−2	4	43	13	..	5
1982-83	10	6	10	3	..	15
1983-84	21	†—2	27	3	..	9
1984-85	3	27	25	3	..	−14
1985-86	−10	36	..	..	..	1
Change 1978-79 to 1985-86						
					(Per cent.)	(Per cent.)
	146	†278	‖189	¶62	364	60

.. not available.

* Life assurance premium relief was abolished for contracts made on or after 14 March 1984. Costs are net of the public expenditure element.

† The former option mortgage scheme was subsumed under the arrangements for giving mortgage interest relief at source (MIRAS) from April 1983. The 1983-84 cost is not therefore directly comparable with that for 1982-83. The percentage increase from 1978-79 to 1985-86 is based on the combined cost of mortgage interest relief and option mortgages. The cost of the option mortgage scheme was as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	148
1979-80	189
1980-81	228
1981-82	262
1982-83	306
1983-84	‡17

‡ For claims in respect of earlier years.

‖ Composite estimates published in the relevant public expenditure White Paper on the basis set out in the Inland Revenue's note of February 1978 to the General Sub-Committee of the Expenditure Committee (second report 1977-79, appendix 15). A comparable estimate for 1985-86 is not available. This approach to the calculation of the cost of pension scheme reliefs included the cost of relief for employees' contributions and funds' investment income net of tax paid on pensions received plus tax in excess of the basic rate on the estimated income element of pensions received. The 1984-85 estimate of cost on this basis is 189 per cent. higher than the 1978-79 figure.

Costs of three of the components of pensions reliefs for 1983-84 onwards are shown below. The total cost of tax reliefs for pension schemes cannot be calculated by summing the costs of the individual reliefs since this would imply a considerable degree of multiple taxation.

	1983-84 £ million	1984-85 £ million	1985-86 £ million
Employees' contributions to funded pension schemes	1,100	1,250	1,400
Pension funds' investment income (excluding capital gains for which no reliable estimate is available)	2,250	2,500	3,500
Lump sums on retirement (assuming relief at the basic rate)	650	900	1,000

¶ Calendar year series. These estimates are particularly tentative and are on the basis that employers' contributions are not taxed as a benefit in kind of the employee. The 1984-85 estimate is 62 per cent. higher than the 1978-79 figure.

● Estimates for 1978-79, 1979-80 and 1985-86 are the costs of tax relief on retirement annuity premiums. For 1980-81 to 1984-85, estimates on a comparable basis are not readily available.

■ Costs of the excess of age allowances over and above the corresponding single person's and married man's allowances.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Turkey

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made, or plans to make, to the Turkish Prime Minister, Mr. Turgut Ozal, concerning the fate of 1,619 missing Greek Cypriots who were taken prisoners following the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

Mr. Eggar: The United Nations intercommunal committee on missing persons in Cyprus offers the best prospect of helpng those affected by this tragic problem which involves both communities in Cyprus. Separate representations would cut across the committee's delicate and difficult task.

Badreddine Children

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts have been made to seek to secure the return of the four Badreddine children who are currently being detained against their will by their father in Tunisia, in breach of English High Court orders.

Mr. Eggar: The existence of the High Court orders has been brought to the attention of the Tunisian authorities and Her Majesty's consul has discussed the case with the Director of Consular Affairs in the Tunisian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The limitations on the action we can take in cases of this type were fully described in the Adjournment debate of the 20 of December 1985 at columns 730-732.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has been in contact with President Bourghiba of Tunisia concerning

the return of the four Badgreddine children who are currently being detained against their will by their father in Tunisia, in breach of English High Court orders.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Cambodian Embassy

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the diplomatic status of the premises formerly occupied by the embassy of Cambodia at Avenue road, St. John's Wood in the City of Westminster; how much is owed in lieu of rates to the City of Westminster; and who is responsible for the payment of the outstanding sum.

Mr. Eggar: The premises are not currently used for the purposes of any diplomatic mission. They therefore enjoy neither inviolability nor diplomatic rating relief.

We understand that the City of Westminster has been unable to collect £40,561 outstanding in respect of rates because they have been unable to prove to the satisfaction of the courts that anybody is in rateable occupation. Rates are the responsibility of the occupier of the premises.

We have under active consideration proposals for legislation to control in exceptional circumstances the acquisition and disposal of diplomatic premises in London.

Departmental Policies

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the objectives of his Department's policies for the rest of this Parliament.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The chief aim of the United Kingdom's foreign policy will remain to protect our country's security and maintain peace through our membership of the North Atlantic Alliance. At the same time, we shall work for a more constructive relationship between the West and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and for concrete progress in arms control. In the enlarged European Community, of which we hold the Presidency from July-December 1986, we shall place special emphasis on the completion of the Common Market, reform of the common agricultural policy, the preservation of the open trading system and the strengthening of political co-operation. We shall fully discharge our undertaking to the people of the Falkland Islands, while continuing to seek more normal relations with Argentina. We shall continue to implement the Sino-British joint declaration on Hong Kong. With our European and Commonwealth partners, we shall work for peaceful and fundamental change in South Africa. We shall play our part in long-term development and famine relief in the poorer countries, and in combating the worldwide scourge of terrorism. We shall support all practical moves for peace and stability in regions of conflict, including the efforts of the United Nations of which we remain a committed member.

Commercial Counsellors

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which British embassies in Warsaw pact countries have commercial counsellors; and, where there is none, when their last one was in post.

Mr. Eggar: There is a full-time commercial counsellor in Her Majesty's embassy, Moscow. In other Warsaw pact countries commercial work is handled at first secretary level, the commercial counsellors having been withdrawn from Bucharest, East Berlin and Warsaw in 1982 and from Prague, Sofia and Budapest more than ten years ago.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list in the *Official Report* all ministerial visits to European Community countries since May 1979, except European Community and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ministerial meetings, giving dates of the visits and the name of the Minister concerned.

Mr. Eggar: Details of all ministerial visits to European countries are not kept in a readily available form. They are currently being compiled as from 1983 when records were started and I shall write to the hon. Member shortly. In the meantime, details of visits by Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers, in the diplomatic wing, since May 1979, are as follows:

Country and Minister	*Date*
Belgium	
Sir Ian Gilmour	June 1979
Secretary of State	November 1979
Mr. Hurd	November 1980
Secretary of State	September 1982
Secretary of State	April 1984
Mr. Rifkind	May 1984
Mr. Rifkind	October 1984
Mr. Rifkind	October 1984
Secretary of State	June 1985
Secretary of State	July 1985
Secretary of State	September 1985
Mr. Renton	November 1985
Mrs. Chalker	February 1986
Denmark	
Secretary of State	May 1979
Mr. Luce	November 1979
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Sir Ian Gilmour	June 1981
Secretary of State	September 1982
Mr. Hurd	January 1983
Mr. Rifkind	April/May 1984
Secretary of State	July 1985
France	
Secretary of State	June 1979
Mr. Ridley	September 1979
Mr. Ridley	November 1979
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Secretary of State	February 1980
Mr. Hurd	March 1980
Sir Ian Gilmour	September 1980
Mr. Hurd	November 1980
Secretary of State	May 1981
Mr. Atkins	October 1981
Mr. Hurd	September 1982
Secretary of State	September 1982
Secretary of State	November 1982
Lord Belstead	February 1983
Secretary of State	July 1983
Mr. Rifkind	July 1983
Mr. Rifkind	October 1983
Secretary of State	October 1983
Mr. Whitney	November 1983
Lady Young	November 1983
Mr. Whitney	February 1984
Secretary of State	May 1984

Country and Minister	Date
Mr. Whitney	May 1984
Secretary of State	May 1984
Secretary of State	June 1984
Mr. Whitney	June 1984
Lady Young	June 1984
Mr. Rifkind	July 1984
Secretary of State	July 1984
Mr. Rifkind	October 1984
Lady Young	November 1984
Secretary of State	November 1984
Mr. Luce	December 1984
Secretary of State	January 1985
Lady Young	February 1985
Secretary of State	March 1985
Mr. Rifkind	April 1985
Mr. Rifkind	April 1985
Lady Young	April 1985
Secretary of State	May 1985
Lady Young	May 1985
Mr. Renton	June 1985
Secretary of State	July 1985
Secretary of State	November 1985
Lady Young	November 1985
Lady Young	December 1985
Mr. Rifkind	December 1985
Secretary of State	January 1986
Germany (Federal Republic of Germany)	
Secretary of State	June 1979
Secretary of State	October 1979
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Mr. Hurd	January 1980
Secretary of State	February 1980
Secretary of State	April 1980
Mr. Hurd	May 1980
Sir Ian Gilmour	October 1980
Secretary of State	November 1980
Secretary of State	April 1981
Secretary of State	October 1981
Secretary of State	November 1981
Secretary of State	February 1982
Mr. Hurd	June 1982
Secretary of State	August 1982
Secretary of State	October 1982
Mr. Hurd	November 1982
Lord Belstead	February 1983
Secretary of State	November 1983
Mr. Rifkind	February 1984
Mr. Rifkind	September 1984
Secretary of State	September 1984
Secretary of State	October 1984
Secretary of State	December 1984
Secretary of State	January 1985
Lady Young	March 1985
Mr. Rifkind	April 1985
Secretary of State	April 1985
Secretary of State	May 1985
Secretary of State	July 1985
Secretary of State	October 1985
Secretary of State	November 1985
Greece	
Mr. Mellor	September 1982
Lord Belstead	January 1983
Republic of Ireland	
Secretary of State	July 1979
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Secretary of State	December 1980
Mr. Hurd	November 1982
Mr. Rifkind	February 1984
Italy	
Secretary of State	October 1979
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Secretary of State	October 1980
Secretary of State	November 1980
Secretary of State	July 1981
Secretary of State	July 1982
Secretary of State	October 1983
Secretary of State	January 1984
Mr. Rifkind	March 1984
Lady Young	May 1984
Secretary of State	October 1984
Secretary of State	March 1985
Mr. Rifkind	June 1985
Secretary of State	June 1985
Secretary of State	November 1985
Luxembourg	
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Mr. Hurd	March 1983
Mr. Rifkind	November 1983
Secretary of State	October 1985
Lady Young	November 1985
Secretary of State	November 1985
Netherlands	
Sir Ian Gilmour	June 1979
Secretary of State	November 1979
Sir Ian Gilmour	January 1980
Secretary of State	December 1980
Mr. Hurd	October 1982
Mr. Hurd	May 1983
Mr. Rifkind	September 1984
Secretary of State	June 1985
Secretary of State	September 1985
Secretary of State	November 1985
Mrs. Chalker	February 1986

Geneva Convention

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects the United Kingdom to sign the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva convention of 1949.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom signed the additional protocols to the Geneva conventions in 1977.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will estimate the total volume catch of fish for the periods *(a)* January to December 1984 and *(b)* January to December 1985 within a 200-mile zone around the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Eggar: The best available estimates of the total catch of fish within a 200-mile zone around the Falkland Islands in 1984 and 1985 are respectively, 349,000 and 437,000 tonnes.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will estimate the total volume catch of fish for the periods *(a)* January to December 1984 and *(b)* January to December 1985 within the Falkland Islands protection zone.

Mr. Eggar: The best available estimates of the total catch of fish within the Falkland Islands protection zone in 1984 and 1985 are, respectively, 241,000 and 302,000 tonnes.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of nations whose fishing vessels were reported as having been fishing within the Falkland Islands protection zone during 1985.

Mr. Eggar: During 1985, fishing vessels of the following fleets were sighted within the Falkland Islands protection zone and believed to be fishing (in alphabetical order): Bulgaria, German Democratic Republic, Japan, Republic of Korea, Poland, Soviet Union, Spain, Taiwan. There were also a few other isolated sightings.

Haiti

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's relations with the new administration in Haiti.

Mr. Eggar: We have no diplomatic staff resident in Haiti and Her Majesty's ambassador to the country resides in Jamaica. A member of his staff was in Haiti from 30 January until 20 February, when he was in close contact with the British community. He had a brief courtesy meeting with the newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs on 13 February in company with our locally appointed Haitian vice-consul.

Foreign Nationals (Representations)

Mr. McGuire asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will detail the criteria he uses to decide whether he should make representations to a foreign country on behalf of foreign nationals who have no connection whatsoever with the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We make such representations where there are compelling humanitarian or human rights grounds and where such representations are appropriate and likely to be effective.

Iran-Iraq War

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received from Her Majesty's ambassadors regarding the Iran-Iraq war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: We receive regular reports from Her Majesty's ambassador in Baghdad and the acting head of the British interests section in Tehran. We deplore the latest escalation in the fighting between Iran and Iraq, which has resulted in further tragic loss of life, and hope that both sides will heed the United Nations Secretary-General's appeal of 14 February which called for a cessation of hostilities so that negotiations aimed at reaching a comprehensive settlement might take place.

Iran

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representation Her Majesty's Government have made concerning the use of torture against their own citizens by the Government of Iran.

Mr. Renton: We wholly condemn the use of torture wherever and whenever it may occur. The United Kingdom co-sponsored the UN resolution in December which called on Iran to respond to the allegations of torture. We have made no recent representations to the Iranian Government specifically on torture, but we do take every suitable opportunity to raise human rights matters with them.

South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation Ltd

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the profit the South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation Ltd of Bermuda has made out of its trading concessions with Tristan da Cunha in the last five years; and whether Her Majesty's Government have provided any funds for the company.

Mr. Eggar: We understand that the gross profits of the South Atlantic Islands Development Corporation have been as follows:

	US$
1981	405,130
1982	1,108,199
1983	1,639,090
1984	1,102,036
1985	1,484,948

We have not provided any funds to the company.

Table Bay Marine

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has as to the profit Table Bay Marine of Capetown has made out of its trading operations with Tristan da Cunha in the last five years; and whether Her Majesty's Government have provided any funds to the company.

Mr. Eggar: We are informed that Table Bay Marine of Capetown does not keep records of profit/loss derived from its Tristan da Cunha trading operations separate from those of its other operations. However we understand that the company has received agency commission on purchases undertaken on behalf of the Government of Tristan da Cunha, as follows:

	Rand
1980-81	21,414·67
1981-82	32,171·03
1982-83	32,909·13
1983-84	30,060·50
1984-85	40,526·82

We have not provided any funds to the company.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether in discussions of the European Eureka programme, he has discussed the implications of British involvement in the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Eggar: The implications of the United Kingdom's involvement in SDI have not been discussed in Eureka meetings that my right hon. and learned Friend has attended with European Foreign Ministers. Eureka is concerned only with civil projects. It is accepted that SDI participation is a matter for each country to decide alone.

Philippines

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards their continued recognition of the Government of the Philippines in the light of the conduct of the recent elections in that country.

Mrs. Chalker: We recognise states, not Governments. Together with our European partners, we have expressed deep concern to the Philippines authorities about developments arising from the presidential elections, and in particular about the evidence of fraud and violence, and have called for an impartial investigation. We shall continue with our partners to support the commitment of the Filipino people to democratic values.

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether Her Majesty's Government are to be represented at the forthcoming inauguration of President Marcos of the Philippines; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Chalker: There is no question of British participation in this ceremony, if indeed it is to take place at all.

EMPLOYMENT

News International (Work Permits)

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many work permits he has authorised for foreign nationals to work for News International; and what criteria he has used.

Mr. Lang: In the last 12 months, one work permit has been issued—on 19 December 1985. The conditions of the work permit scheme were satisfied: permits are granted in respect of employment requiring professional qualifications, administrative responsibility or high technical skills, for which resident labour is not available.

News International Printing Plant, Wapping

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General how many visits have been made by Health and Safety Executive inspectors to the News Group Newspapers Limited additional printing facility at Wapping in each of the last four weeks.

Mr. Lang: One, on 18 February 1986.

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General if he has any plans to discuss the accident rate at the News Group Newspapers Limited additional printing facility at Wapping with the chairman of the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Lang: No.

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General if he will obtain a report from the chairman of the Health and Safety Executive of how many reportable accidents have occurred at the News Group Newspapers Limited additional printing facility at Wapping in each of the last four weeks; and if he will make a statement

Mr. Lang: One accident at the Wapping premises has been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in the last four weeks. The accident occurred on 3 February.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General what was the number of job vacancies registered at Coventry at the latest available date; and how many of those were *(a)* part-time, *(b)* situated outside the Coventry travel-to-work area and *(c)* funded by community programme, or other special employment measures.

Mr. Lang: The number of vacancies, excluding those funded by special employment measures, registered at Coventry jobcentre remaining unfilled on 3 January 1986 was 729, of which 72 were part-time—i.e., for less than 30 hours per week. In addition, there were 240 unfilled vacancies funded by special employment measures, of which 197 involved work for less than 35 hours per week.

The exact location of vacancies relating to travel-to-work area boundaries could be established only at disproportionate cost, although it is likely that the majority of vacancies registered at Coventry jobcentre are in the Coventry and Hinckley travel-to-work area.

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will give for Coventry the latest unemployment figures, broken down by age, sex and duration.

Mr. Lang: Following is the requested information, which is available in the library.

Age and Duration Analysis of the Unemployed for Statistical Date 9 January 1986
Local Authority areas

District: Coventry

Males

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	Under 17	17	18	19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60 and over	Total
One or less	12	22	24	22	84	39	37	18	20	26	15	15	16	350
Over 1 and up to 2	7	7	12	10	46	28	25	22	8	5	13	4	12	199
Over 2 and up to 4	8	20	24	17	95	45	29	36	20	27	20	26	16	383
Over 4 and up to 6	13	26	29	32	129	69	48	41	33	22	27	18	22	509
Over 6 and up to 8	10	24	20	26	98	66	48	39	33	25	21	24	22	456
Over 8 and up to 13	33	66	72	56	230	128	90	84	61	45	42	52	51	1,010
Over 13 and up to 26	122	204	241	158	554	282	176	162	122	98	101	138	140	2,498
Over 26 and up to 39	14	109	107	82	371	169	147	109	78	52	66	76	110	1,490
Over 39 and up to 52	1	34	64	58	246	147	120	101	72	69	62	99	90	1,163
Over 52 and up to 65	0	30	54	47	178	155	94	72	69	48	61	58	76	942
Over 65 and up to 78	0	69	79	80	218	132	78	68	42	52	63	69	14	964
Over 78 and up to 104	0	3	64	94	286	163	135	130	89	67	80	93	7	1,211
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	32	126	514	293	202	208	178	157	174	199	8	2,091
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	27	381	224	206	172	146	142	137	211	3	1,649
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	220	178	147	190	142	128	142	209	5	1,361
Over 260	0	0	0	0	146	284	252	236	228	225	218	322	6	1,917
Grand totals Males	220	614	822	835	3,796	2,402	1,834	1,688	1,341	1,188	1,242	1,613	598	18,193

Females

Duration of Unemployment in weeks	Under 17	17	18	19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-54	55-59	60 and over	Total
One or less	13	14	16	12	70	27	17	14	6	10	8	9	0	216
Over 1 and up to 2	5	8	14	14	30	30	15	6	2	3	4	8	0	139
Over 2 and up to 4	6	9	19	10	81	34	28	20	8	12	11	4	0	242
Over 4 and up to 6	5	12	15	13	52	38	26	12	13	15	14	17	0	232
Over 6 and up to 8	16	29	25	19	70	34	16	9	9	9	8	11	0	255
Over 8 and up to 13	16	63	42	35	147	105	55	53	30	24	20	19	0	609
Over 13 and up to 26	114	211	249	157	319	211	92	63	76	57	45	53	0	1,647
Over 26 and up to 39	7	81	71	64	230	144	67	46	48	48	41	39	0	886
Over 39 and up to 52	1	30	42	39	140	128	70	39	43	36	32	45	0	645
Over 52 and up to 65	0	15	29	46	121	75	42	22	37	43	26	37	0	493
Over 65 and up to 78	0	48	78	82	93	41	23	18	27	25	25	40	0	500
Over 78 and up to 104	0	5	42	49	103	72	41	30	39	36	40	53	1	511
Over 104 and up to 156	0	0	33	79	182	58	52	37	39	55	75	68	1	679
Over 156 and up to 208	0	0	0	20	158	35	24	20	24	43	45	60	0	429
Over 208 and up to 260	0	0	0	0	84	24	11	8	16	19	34	36	1	233
Over 260	0	0	0	0	49	59	34	22	24	40	60	88	0	376
Grand totals Females	183	525	675	639	1,929	1,115	613	419	441	475	488	587	3	8,092

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Paymaster General what have been the Government's annual estimates, from 1979 to 1985, of the level of unemployment.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows annual average figures for the United Kingdom. They are adjusted for discontinuities and relate to unemployed claimants, excluding school leavers.

	Number
1979	1,173,200
1980	1,487,100
1981	2,307,300
1982	2,669,000
1983	2,912,100
1984	3,046,800
1985	3,166,700

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Paymaster General if he will issue to YTS trainees a contract of traineeship with legal status.

Mr. Lang: Proposals for a training agreement for all YTS trainees were agreed by the Youth Training Board on 11 February 1986 and will be put before the Manpower Services Commission on 27 February 1986. These proposals would oblige managing agents to give each trainee an agreement conforming to a framework to be laid down by the commission. The managing agent could give this contractual status if he so chose.

Health and Safety (Letters)

Mr. Michie asked the Paymaster General what instructions the Health and Safety Executive has given to its inspectors on the passing to safety representatives of copies of letters sent to employers following a visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The Health and Safety Commission has given guidance to enforcing authorities on the provision of information by inspectors and other staff to employees or their representatives. The principle followed is that safety representatives should have access to appropriate information which will enable them to carry out their functions.

Accidents (Power Stations)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Paymaster General how many notifiable accidents and deaths, respectively, were recorded over the most recent annual period for which figures are available in the operation, respectively, of coal-fired, oil-fired and nuclear power stations; and how many were notified in respect of coal mining operations.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members' Pensions

Mr. Robert Sheldon asked the Lord Privy Seal what would be the cost of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* trebling the statutory entitlement of former Members of the House from the House of Commons Members Fund for those aged over 65 years, over 70 years and over 75 years, respectively.

Mr. Biffen: The annual extra costs of *(a)* doubling and *(b)* trebling the payments at present made to former Members of the House from the House of Commons Members' Fund under the provisions of the House of Commons Members' Fund and Parliamentary Pensions Act 1981 for those over 65 years, over 70 years and over 75 years, respectively, would be as follows:

	Over 65 years £	*Over 70 years* £	*Over 75 years* £
Doubling payments	76,000	70,000	51,000
Trebling payments	152,000	140,000	102,000

Medical Facilities

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will describe the medical facilities available in the House at all times when the House is sitting.

Mr. Biffen: Details of the Palace of Westminster's medical facilities and procedures to be followed in an emergency are contained in the leaflet issued jointly by the Serjeant at Arms and Black Rod. I have asked for a copy to be sent to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark asked the Lord Privy Seal how many staff working in the House, including security staff and police, are trained in the use of first aid and in particular in the use of oxygen equipment.

Mr. Biffen: Forty-seven members of staff and 139 police and security officers are trained in first aid, including resuscitation techniques. With the exception of the nursing sister, their training does not include the use of oxygen equipment.

SCOTLAND

Dementia

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has recently received representations from Scottish Action on Dementia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer the hon. Member to the reply which my right hon. and learned Friend gave the right hon. Member for Clydesdale (Dame J. Hart) on 12 February, 1986 at column *473*.

Test Drilling

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any outstanding requests from the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for permission to carry out test drilling in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Any application for planning permission for test drilling would be submitted to the planning authority for the area concerned. I am not aware of any current applications. If planning permission were refused an appeal might be lodged with me but no appeals by the authority relating to test drilling are outstanding.

Colleges of Education

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on what evidence the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council bases its recommendations that three colleges of education be closed.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The arguments underlying the council's recommendations on the colleges of education, and the factors taken into account, are set out in paragraphs 5.27 to 5.39 of the council's report (Cmnd. 9676).

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what factors he will take account of in deciding on the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's recommendations on colleges of education; and how important economic consideration will be.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) indicated on 9 December 1985 at columns 460-461 in answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame North (Mr. Corrie) the Government have invited comments on the council's report and will wish to consider these before decisions are taken on the council's various recommendations. With regard to those recommendations relating to the colleges of education, my right hon. and learned Friend will have in mind the need to reach decisions, in the light of comments submitted, which are appropriate on educational grounds and at the same time cost-effective.

Leukaemia

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will collect the information and publish a list of the incidence of leukemia and myloid leukaemia for each convenient area of Scotland and details of any significant variations.

Mr. John MacKay: Data on all forms of cancer, including leukaemia, are collected routinely by the cancer registries, and are published. Detailed statistics on leukaemia were presented as evidence to the Black inquiry and were published. Further work to validate and update these statistics is expected to be completed by the late spring. These results will also be published.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the further analysis of information on incidence of leukaemia in the south-west of Scotland and the case for a systematic analysis of up-to-date data for the whole of Scotland; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Several such representations have been received. As the hon. Member knows, a systematic analysis of leukaemia statistics is taking place at present and it is intended that the results will be published.

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up a comprehensive inquiry into the discharge

of radioactive materials from all sources in Scotland, and sources outwith Scotland which affect Scotland, and of possible links with the incidence of leukaemia and other cancers and related matters.

Mr. John MacKay: No. As the hon. Member knows the statistics on leukaemia are already being examined in detail. Where rates are significantly in excess of those expected and in areas where there could be possible links with radiation the relevant information is being referred to the Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment.

Sellafield

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken in relation to the Scottish data following the disclosure that the Sellafield discharge information given to the Black committee was incorrect.

Mr. John MacKay: The Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment is already considering the implications for the conclusions reached by the Black inquiry of new information now available on Sellafield discharges.

Teachers

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the estimated demand for teachers in each of the next 10 years in primary and secondary schools in Scotland on which the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's recommendations are based; and what is the basis of the calculation of the estimated demand in each case.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As is noted in the footnote to paragraph 5.39 of the report of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council on its review of higher education in Scotland (Cmnd. 9676), the council had available to it the projections contained in appendix 3 to the Comptroller and Auditor General's report "Scottish Education Department: Control of Further Education Establishment" (HC 424).

The Scottish Education Department's projections of the requirements for trained teachers are based on a number of factors, including projections of the future population of primary and secondary school pupils, assumptions about school staffing consistent with the Government's public expenditure plans and estimates of the numbers of teachers leaving the profession.

Tourism

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has now completed his consideration of the Scottish Affairs Committee's recommendation for the transfer of tourist promotion activities from the Highlands and Islands Development Board to the Scottish Tourist Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: I have nothing to add to the answer given to the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) on 4 February at column 97.

Scottish Adult Basic Education Unit

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what grants he has paid to the Scottish adult basic education unit for each of the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: Grants paid to the Scottish adult basic education unit for each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	*Recurrent grant* £	*Supplementary grant* £
1981-82	120,000	2,647
1982-83	130,000	10,000
1983-84	152,000	7,000
1984-85	160,650	—
1985-86	165,500	—

Mr. Millan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will ensure that there is no reduction in the real value of the funds available to the Scottish adult basic education unit for 1986-87, compared to the current year.

Mr. Rifkind: In 1986-87 the current level of grant paid to the Scottish adult basic education unit (£165,500) will be aggregated with the current level of grant paid to the Scottish Community Education Council (£356,000) which has been responsible for managing the unit since 1983. The total grant to the council in 1986-87 will be £542,000, an overall increase of almost 4 per cent.

Corpach Sawmill

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 5 February, *Official Report*, column *167*, about projects considered successful by the Highlands and Islands Development Board, if he will give details of the current status of *(a)* the sawmill at Corpach, which was shown to the Scottish Affairs Committee by the board and *(b)* of the other projects drawn to the Committee's attention.

Mr. John MacKay: *(a)* The sawmill at Corpach is continuing in operation under the new owners, Thomas Smith and Sons.

(b) I have nothing to add to the answer given to my hon. Friend on 5 February 1986 at column *167*.

Consultative Committee on the Curriculum

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future of the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum.

Mr. Rifkind: As I announced on 7 February 1986 in answer to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) at column 276-7, the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum is one of a number of bodies on which a review is currently being carried out as part of the Government's programme of regular reviews of non-departmental public bodies. This review will have implications for the CCC's remit, structure and priorities. In particular it will have to consider the means of ensuring that in future the pace of curricular change is more closely related to the ability of the education service to deliver it effectively. I have therefore decided that the appointment of a new Consultative Committee on the Curriculum, which is due in August 1986, should be deferred for a year until August 1987 in order to allow any changes arising from the review to be implemented before the new body takes office. I am concerned moreover that a new CCC should secure at the outset the full support of the teaching profession for its work and believe that postponement of the appointment of a new CCC will help to ensure this.

My Department is therefore writing today to the chairman and members of the present CCC inviting them to continue in office in order to continue and complete current work. I am very grateful to the present membership for the valuable work done by the CCC during its current term of office and hope that they will be prepared to serve for a further year.

TRANSPORT

National Bus Company

5. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made towards the sale of National Bus Company subsidiary companies.

Mr. Ridley: The NBC is preparing some 65 local subsidiaries for sale. Over 50 local management teams are interested in buying their subsidiaries, and expressions of interest have also been received from third parties. The NBC will be getting on with disposals as quickly as possible.

M25 (Service Areas)

13. **Mr. Warren** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to seek to expedite the provision of motorway service areas on the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: I aim to establish four service areas as soon as practicable, at South Mimms in the north, Thurrock to the east, Clacket Lane near Westerham to the south and Iver to the west. These proposals are at various stages.

Civil Aircraft (Safety)

16. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed with the Civil Aviation Authority the structural safety of civil aircraft.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The structural safety of civil aircraft is the statutory responsibility of the Civil Aviation Authority, which is advised by the Airworthiness Requirements Board. The authority keeps me informed of significant safety issues.

23. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the Civil Aviation Authority expects that the additional inspections specified in the answer of 7 February, *Official Report*, column 272 relating to cracks in jumbo jets will be completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The civil Aviation Authority has informed me that the initial inspection of the aircraft skin showed that no United Kingdom registered aircraft were cracked. Subsequently, as a result of additional inspections, cracks requiring repair have been found in the internal structure of 10 United Kingdom aircraft.

The CAA expects that as further aircraft are subjected to these inspections more may be found requiring repair, but the evidence does not warrant a general withdrawal of the type from service because the cracking is within the structural capability of the aircraft. The CAA has agreed a programme of inspection and repair where necessary. Each aeroplane takes three to four days for this work to be carried out and it is currently anticipated that all aircraft should be completed by mid-March.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the chairmen of British Airways and the Civil Aviation Authority on the work carried out or to be carried out on cracks discovered in some Boeing 747s.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority is in close contact with British Airways and has kept me informed about the cracks discovered in some Boeing 747 aircraft. The CAA has agreed with British Airways a programme of inspection and repair where necessary. Each aircraft takes about three to four days for this work to be carried out and all affected aircraft should be completed by the end of March.

A longer-term programme for inspecting a wider area may be instituted and may involve considerably more time on the ground to carry out. This long-term inspection has not yet been finalised and the FAA has not yet issued a further airworthiness directive.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the accident investigation branch of his Department is co-ordinating information on Boeing 747s with the Civil Aviation Authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Inspectors of the accidents investigation branch participated in an investigation, conducted by the National Transportation Safety Board, USA, into an accident to a British Airways Boeing 747 which occurred during the approach to Boston, Massachusetts on 15 December 1985. On this approach sections of the left inboard trailing edge fore flap fell from the aircraft. The findings of the investigation were passed to the Civil Aviation Authority along with the results of the inspections of some other British Airways Boeing 747 flaps, carried out as a result of this accident.

The only other recent involvement of the accidents investigation branch with Boeing 747 aircraft was the analysis of the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder outputs from the Air India aircraft which crashed in the Irish sea on 23 June 1985. This work was in response to a request from the Indian authorities.

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has received from the aviation safety centre on the possible structural defects of some Boeing 747s.

Mr. Michael Spicer: None.

Concrete Safety Barriers

17. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the adoption of concrete safety barriers on roads in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Since the beginning of 1985 concrete safety barriers have been the subject of three exchanges in the House and some correspondence. I met a number of hon. Members on 28 January to discuss the subject fully.

London Regional Transport (Mercedes Order)

19. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport why London Regional Transport has placed an order for 600 Mercedes minibuses.

Mr. David Mitchell: I understand that neither LRT nor London Buses Ltd. have placed such an order.

London Country Buses

20. **Mr. Robert B. Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards a management-staff buy-out of London Country Buses.

Mr. David Mitchell: I would welcome buy-out proposals for the four separate parts of London Country Buses.

Cyclists (Radio Cassette Players)

21. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if his Department has made any studies into the road safety factor of cyclists wearing personal radios or cassette players.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Transport Road and Research Laboratory is conducting a hospital-based study of cycling accidents. If the use of radio and cassette players represents a significant factor in such accidents, this should become clear from the results of the study.

Eastleigh Railway Workshop

22. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on the recommendations in the Serpell report regarding the future management of railway workshops as it relates to the Eastleigh railway workshop.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Serpell report emphasised that BR's maintenance and repair facilities needed to be reviewed as a whole. The British Railways Board has recently announced a restructuring of British Rail Engineering Ltd. into two separate groups from April 1986, with the Eastleigh works to form part of the BR maintenance group.

A127 (Safety Barriers)

24. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the provision of road safety barriers along the A127 in Essex.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is central reserve safety fencing on all but two lengths of the trunk road in Essex. Work will start shortly on fencing between the GLC boundary and the A128 and during the coming financial year between the A130 and the Southend boundary. Within Southend the A127 is the responsibility of Essex county council.

Rail Services (Bradford)

25. **Mr. Madden** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of British Rail, he will raise with him the provision of rail services in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: Responsibility for the level of local passenger rail services in West Yorkshire rests with the Passenger Transport Authority. It would not be appropriate for me to intervene.

Dockland Light Railway

26. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any plans for further consultation concerning the eastern extension of the dockland light railway; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 3 February, at column 42.

Transport Companies (Denationalisation)

27. **Mr. Hickmet** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what change there has been in the performance of state-owned transport companies which have been denationalised since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: Eormer state-owned transport companies are now free from constraints on their development and can profitably expand their activities and increase investment. The success of our policy for former state-owned transport companies is reflected in the increased share price of the companies which we have sold: for the National Freight Consortium, employees have seen the value of their investment multiply over 20 times since privatisation; for Associated British Ports, the value of shares has nearly quadrupled since the original share sale in 1983. There are no other quoted companies in this category.

Airlines (State Subsidies)

28. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to prevent unfair competition to British airlines from the state-subsidised airlines of other European Community member states.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We are pressing for agreement this year on a package of measures which will both bring real liberalisation and practical application of the treaty of Rome's competition rules to aviation.

Aviation (Liberalisation)

29. **Mr. Richard Shepherd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made in negotiations with his colleagues in the European Economic Community towards the liberalisation of air transport.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We now have four liberal agreements with other EC members, and the results so far are most encouraging. Last June we reviewed with the Dutch the success of the first year of our liberal agreement: 10 new services were introduced and traffic grew by 16 per cent. In December I met my German opposite number to review the first year of the new Anglo-German arrangements; 12 new services had been introduced and there were signs that new low fares had stimulated traffic, which had grown by 14 per cent. This year we are pressing hard for real progress at Community level.

Motor Cycle Couriers

30. **Mr. Higgins** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to prohibit motor cyclists who have not passed his Department's riding test from acting as commercial motor cycle couriers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are not at present persuaded of the case for such a measure. I hope that dispatch companies will follow the code of practice drawn up by the Despatch Association. It recommends the employment only of competent, experienced and knowledgeable riders or those taking part in a recognised training scheme.

Our overall priority is to improve the riding standards of all motor cyclists by ensuring that they take proper training in the use of their machines. That is why we are currently reviewing the licensing, testing and training arrangements.

Road Accidents

31. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the trend in road traffic accident casualties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Information about the number of road casualties in recent years is shown in table 5 of "Road Accidents Great Britain". A copy is in the Library.

There were 5,599 deaths in 1984, 3 per cent. higher than in 1983, but 19 per cent. below the 1974 figure.

In the first nine months of 1985, deaths were 10 per cent. lower than in the first nine months of 1984. If this trend is continued through the fourth quarter of 1985, the number of road accident deaths in 1985 will be the lowest recorded since 1954.

London Transport (Passenger Statistics)

32. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers were carried by *(a)* London buses and *(b)* London underground trains in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The information requested is as follows:

Passenger journeys on LTE-LRT services

	Bus (millions)	*Underground (millions)*
1981	1,080	541
1982	1,040	498
1983	1,090	563
1984	1,160	651
1985	1,150	720

London Regional Transport deserves congratulations for attracting this rising number of passengers.

British Rail (Investment)

33. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the amount of British Rail's investment programme which he has authorised since June 1983.

Mr. David Mitchell: We have approved projects totalling over £775 million.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much investment has been agreed for British Rail in each of the years 1979 to 1986; and how this compares to 1974 to 1979.

Mr. David Mitchell: My hon. Friend will find British Rail's annual investment allocations listed in the table of "Nationalised Industries' Capital Requirements", which is included in each year's public expenditure White Paper.

North Wales Main Line

34. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has received any proposals from British Rail for electrifying the North Wales main line; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: I have received no such proposal and therefore I have no statement to make.

Chemicals (Conveyance)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if benzylamine has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Benzylamine is classified as a corrosive liquid under the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981 and an appropriate hazard warning panel must be displayed by the vehicle concerned.

This substance is used as a pesticide. It is regarded as "corrosive" for the purposes of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984, and packages must also be marked to indicate that the contents may cause burns and that, in the case of contact with eyes, rinse immediately with plenty of water and seek medical advice. No further package marking is required for transport purposes.

Hazard warning panels are required only for carriage by road in tank vehicles or large tank containers. For the purposes of the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations the substance meets the criteria for classification as a corrosive liquid and a full hazard warning panel with the "corrosive" diamond and substance identification No. 1760 should be displayed.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if aminotriazole, has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: These substances are not regarded as dangerous in transport and vehicles carrying them are not required to display hazard warning panels.

These liquid agricultural herbicides are regarded as "harmful" for the purposes of supply and use under the Classification, Packaging and Labelling Regulations 1984, and packages must be marked with a number of appropriate risk and safety phrases. The substances fall below the toxicity level for transport purposes which is less stringent than that for supply and use.

Hazard warning panels are required only for carriage by road in tank vehicles or large tank containers, but these substances do not fall within the classification criteria for the Dangerous Substances (Conveyance by Road in Road Tankers and Tank Containers) Regulations 1981.

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if butanediol diglycidl ether has been *(a)* approved as a dangerous substance that is permitted for conveyance by road and *(b)* classified for the purpose of assigning a hazard warning sign on transporting vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on Friday 21 February 1986, at column 323.

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of public service vehicles, by operator group for the South Wales traffic area for each year since 1979, that failed the annual Department of Transport test on the original examination.

Mr. Peter Bottomely: Public service vehicle annual test statistics are available only from 1982-83 onwards. The number of failures at the first attempt is as follows:

South Wales traffic area—PSV annual test; initial failure rate (by operator group)

	National Bus Company		*Local Authority*		*Private*	
		per cent.		*per cent.*		*per cent.*
1982-83						
Total number of tests	922		501		2,176	
Number of initial failures	485	(53)	237	(47)	1,179	(54)
1983-84						
Total numbers of tests	834		503		2,198	
Number of initial failures	321	(38)	183	(36)	1,121	(51)
1984-85						
Total number of tests	693		462		1,859	
Number of initial failures	231	(33)	175	(38)	948	(51)

Road Safety

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Transport when the interdepartmental working party on future road safety policy is due to report; and if he will publish their conclusions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I expect the report of the interdepartmental group reviewing road safety policy in July. When I have read it I shall consider how best to make its conclusions public.

Oil Pollution (North-East Coast)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will instigate an inquiry into the oil pollution along the north-east coast of England during the week beginning 16 February; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many birds he estimates were badly affected by the oil slick off the north-east coast of England during the week beginning 16 February.

Mr. Ridley: I am not aware of any oil slick off the north-east coast.

The Nature Conservancy Council advises that up to 20 February, 570 birds, predominantly guillemots, had been affected; 415 of these were live birds and 155 were dead.

My Department's marine pollution control unit has an arrangement with the Nature Conservancy Council whereby an anti-pollution aircraft is flown on at sea reconnaissance whenever reports are received of five or more live oiled birds on 1 km of beach on two successive tides. One such flight, with an NCC observer on board, took place on 17 February but no oil could be found at sea. Samples have been taken both of the oil that has come ashore and of that on some of the birds affected and this will be analysed to try and determine its type and possible source of sources.

As oil has been affecting sea birds along the north-east coast of England for the last 10 years it is also proposed to deploy the MPCU's recently acquired remote sensing aircraft to carry out reconnaissance flights over a period of days on the next occasion that there is a sustained spell of north-east or east winds in a determined effort to try to establish the source of this oil.

Bus Companies (Redundancies)

Mr. Dixon asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many redundancies have been declared in the passenger transport authorities and the National Bus Company since October 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: No firm information has been received so far. The number of redundancies will depend on the competitiveness of the individual operators and their success in winning tenders for subsidised services.

Lorries (Anti-spray Devices)

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he is planning to review enforcement methods on the fitting of anti-spray devices on heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering whether anti-spray devices should be added to those items specifically checked at the annual test for heavy lorries.

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he intends making the fitting of anti-spray devices compulsory on older heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In November 1984 regulations came into effect which require the older existing heavy trailers of articulated lorries, falling within their scope, to be fitted with anti-spray devices conforming to British Standard BSAU 200 by October 1987.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the percentage of heavy goods vehicles fitted with anti-spray devices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We do not have records of the percentage of lorries equipped with anti-spray devices. Industry estimates that about 80,000 vehicles have been fitted so far.

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will report on the progress in the introduction of self-verification methods for anti-spray devices on heavy goods vehicles.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Heavy lorries falling within the scope of regulation 46E of the Construction and Use Regulations 1978 must be fitted with anti-spray devices conforming with British Standards BSAU 200.

The British Standards Institution offers third party certification, under its kite mark scheme, and several manufacturers have submitted their products.

Passenger Train Mileage

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many passenger train miles were run per week during the period from the beginning of November 1984 to the end of April 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: The Department does not hold such information for periods of less than a year. Average weekly passenger train miles run by British Rail over the period from the beginning of January 1984 to the end of March 1985 were 3·7 million.

DEFENCE

Sharp-Hansford Report

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is now ready to place the Sharp-Hansford report in the Library and announce the Government's decisions on it.

Mr. Lee: The Government have not yet taken any decisions on the recommendations of the Sharp-Hansford report. They hope to do so in due course once they have fully considered the consultants' recommendations. Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses today.

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he has sent copies of the Sharp-Hansford report to all those who were consulted during the course of their inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Relevant extracts from the report have been sent to the principal parties consulted during the inquiry. Consultation with other interested parties will take place as appropriate. I have nothing to add to the answers I gave to my hon. Friend on 9 December 1985 at column *546*.

Trident

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he is yet in a position to give an updated estimate of the cost of Trident.

Mr. Norman Lamont: This will be announced shortly.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what penalty clauses are contained in the memorandum of understanding on the strategic defence initiative with the United States of America.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence under what national authority United Kingdom companies involved in strategic defence initiative research will be regulated in respect of such research.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Depending on the nature of the contractural arrangements applicable to each piece of work placed in the United Kingdom either United States or United Kingdom law may apply.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether approval has been given to the visit of the team led by Paul Hopler from the Pentagon to survey British technology of potential value to the strategic defence initiative programme with a view to its classification.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No request for such a visit has been made.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the extent to which the involvement of United Kingdom technologies in the strategic defence initiative would preclude their use in the European Esprit and Eureka programmes for civil purposes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is my intention, through participation in the United States strategic defence initiative, to enhance the potential for the development of United Kingdom technologies for a wide range of applications including civil programmes of the kind referred to. This objective has been kept very much in mind in the preparation of the arrangements for participation and will remain so as programmes proceed.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what further implementing instructions were agreed on Monday 17 February by Professor Richard Norman and Lieutenant-General James Abrahamson regarding the strategic defence initiative.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The document referred to covers administrative arrangements in support of the memorandum of understanding of 6 December 1985 for United Kingdom participation in the United States strategic defence initiative research.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Governments of France and Germany on United Kingdom participation in the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Discussions have taken place bilaterally where appropriate and within the Western European Union with member states about participation by the United Kingdom and other European allies in the United States strategic defence initiative research programme.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what he is doing to safeguard intellectual property rights for British universities and firms involved in the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The memorandum of understanding and supporting documentation related to British participation in the SDI research programme provide satisfactory safeguards on intellectual property rights for universities, research institutions and firms who may participate in the programme.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement regarding the role of Ford as

lead contractor with GEC Marconi as a subsidiary on a strategic defence initiative contract for computer and communications aspects of a defensive system to shield the West from a nuclear strike by the Soviet Union.

Mr. Norman Lamont: As part of the SDI research programme, GEC Marconi has, during the last week, been awarded by Ford Aerospace and Communications two sub-contracts on battle management-C3. Ford is under contract to the United States Department of Defence.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the extent of the proposed involvement of Westland Research in composite materials in the strategic defence initiative programme on contracts led by UTG/ Sikorsky.

Mr. Norman Lamont: Westland is currently examining with the United States SDI organisation the possibility of obtaining United States-funded work in the area of composite materials as part of the SDI research programme.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has given approval to the United States Office of Naval Research for approaching British academic groups, such as those at Brunel, with a view to their participation in strategic defence initiative research programmes.

Mr. Norman Lamont: United States authorities do not require United Kingdom Government approval before approaching British academic groups.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the role of General Motors' subsidiary company Electronic Data Services and Logica UK in the strategic defence initiative programme.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I have no information on any such role.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will take steps to seek the advice on the feasibility of strategic defence initiative research from Professor Roger Needham of Cambridge, Professor Igor Alecksanders, John Darlington, and Robert Kowalski of Imperial college, London, and Professor Tony House of Oxford.

Mr. Norman Lamont: No, although if any of the persons named in the question wishes to offer such advice, they are free to do so.

Space Shuttle

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the basis of United Kingdom participation in the United States space shuttle; and what are the defence implications, including the defence research and development implications.

Mr. Norman Lamont: We are a customer for the United States space shuttle as a launch vehicle for our military communications satellites Skynet 4A and 4B. The space shuttle itself is a United States programme without United Kingdom Government involvement.

Military Critical Technologies

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what undertakings have been made to give Paul Hopler and his colleagues from the Pentagon military critical technologies list access to the work of Heriot Watt and other universities with a view to their classification under Cocom rules.

Mr. Norman Lamont: None.

Anti-ballistic Missiles

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has had from Sir Ronald Mason FRS regarding the alleged breach of the anti-ballistic missile treaty, article 15, by the European Computer Architecture Studies such as that led by Ford, involving the transfer of anti-ballistic missile technology to a non-signatory power such as Britain.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Secretary of State for Defence is not aware of having received representations from Sir Ronald Mason FRS regarding an alleged breach of the 1972 ABM treaty.

Metereological Office

Mr. Wiggin asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the conclusions reached by the survey on Metereological Office services recently conducted by a firm of market researchers in Aberdeen; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: A number of studies have been commissioned by the Meteorological Office following the resource control review, which recommended that the Meterological Office should seek to expand its commercial activities. Reports of these studies will not be published as they may benefit competitor organisations. The reports have not yet been presented.

Helicopter Search and Rescue Services

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give his estimate of the cost per hour in flight of operating a Wessex search and rescue helicopter.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *390*]: The estimated cost of operating a Royal Navy Wessex helicopter is £4,380 per hour.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Benefits (Claimants)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons, registered for social security purposes as having no fixed address, and claiming benefits from local offices of his Department in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* Swansea, respectively, are former inpatients at mental hospitals.

Mr. Major: I regret that no information is available centrally on the number of persons claiming social security benefits at Cardiff and Swansea local offices who had no fixed address and were former inpatients at mental hospitals.

Paediatricians

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* for each health authority in England the number of *(a)* paediatric cardiologists and *(b)* paediatric cardiac surgeons employed.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not available. Neither paediatric cardiology nor paediatric cardiac surgery are recognised as distinct specialties by the Royal Colleges concerned. However, all paediatricians are trained in and provide paediatric cardiology, and all cardiothoracic surgeons are trained in and perform paediatric cardiac surgery. Within each of these major specialties there are some doctors who practice almost exclusively in the sub-specialty, but their numbers are not collected centrally.

Residential Homes

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the joint working party to consider the means of harmonising financial support for people in residential care homes to meet for the first time; when he expects them to finish their deliberations; and who will be represented on the working party.

Mr. Newton: We expect the first meeting of the joint working party to be held in about four weeks' time. It will aim to produce a report within 12 months. The DHSS, the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office, the Treasury, the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities will be represented.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make the findings of the Ernst and Whinney report on residential care available to the public.

Mr. Newton: We expect to receive Ernst and Whinney's report on residential care and nursing homes at the beginning of next month and will then consider whether, and if so in what form, the report should be published.

Board and Lodging Payments

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to Department of Health and Social Security officials of the interpretation of the exceptional hardship exemption for board and lodging payments.

Mr. Newton: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 12 February at columns *488-89*.

Income Statistics

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the income range of families in the bottom quintile of the national distribution of income, adjusted for differences in family size and composition; and if he will also give a breakdown by region of this figure.

Mr. Newton: The latest available estimate, derived from the family expenditure survey is that the net income range in the bottom quintile of the national distribution of income is up to £72·40 per week for a married couple without children and the equivalent for other families. Net income in this context is defined as gross income including state benefits, less income tax and national insurance contributions, adjusted for differences in family size, family composition and tenure status. This definition is consistent with figures published in Volume 3 of the Green Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9519).

Regional breakdowns are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to the statement of 17 February, *Official Report*, column 30, he will list each of the steps he has taken to bring to the attention of claimants the availability of special payments in areas where exceptionally severe weather has been declared.

Mr. Newton: In early January 1986, following the revised guidance issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer on this subject, local offices were advised to follow standing instructions on publicity arrangements in areas where exceptionally severe weather had been declared. (A copy of both the relevant paragraphs of the S Manual, 7448-7450, and S Circular 48/85 are in the Library).

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons have received payments in each area now officially designated as exceptionally cold; and what was the average individual payment in each area.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not yet available. When the period during which the possibility of such payments is likely to arise is over, local offices will be asked to make a return so that the total number of payments made for this winter and the cost can be calculated.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he has asked the fuel boards to send out claim forms for exceptionally severe weather payments to all claimants on fuel direct at the same time as their bill;

(2) where he has distributed leaflets about exceptionally severe weather payments;

(3) if he has distributed leaflets advising claimants about exceptionally severe weather payments to family practitioner committees for distribution to claimants through general practitioner surgeries.

Mr. Newton: Paragraphs 7448-7450 of the S Manual, a copy of which is in the Library, cover the publicity arrangements to be followed in areas where exceptionally severe weather has been declared.

Most local offices already have a supply of leaflets both for display themselves and to distribute to local organisations; further supplies of these were sent out last week.

The S Manual provides for leaflets to be sent to local authority Social Services departments, housing benefit offices, advice bureaux and other agencies but not specifically family practitioner committees. Where fuel boards are willing and able to identify fuel direct claimants, they will send them a letter, incorporating a claim form, with their bill. Otherwise local offices are under instructions to write to these claimants themselves.

Ms. Harman: asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much was paid out to claimants for exceptionally severe weather payments in 1985 by *(a)* Blenheim grove office, SE15, *(b)* Bournemouth road office, SE15 and *(c)* London offices;

(2) how many claims were accepted for payment under exceptionally severe weather in 1985 in *(a)* Blenheim grove office, *(b)* Bournemouth road office and *(c)* London offices.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when leaflets about exceptionally severe weather payments will be made available to Department of Health and Social Security offices in *(a)* Blenheim grove, SE15, *(b)* Bournemouth road, SE15 and *(c)* London offices.

Mr. Newton: An additional supply of leaflets was sent to all offices in south London on 20 February 1986 and to all offices in north London on 21 February 1986.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if people who cannot estimate normal consumption of fuel because they were (i) abroad, (ii) in prison, (iii) in hospital and (iv) not responsible for fuel bills for any other reason in the comparison period will be eligible for payments for extra heating due to exceptionally severe weather.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the guidance issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer on 6 December 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Conductive Education Project

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to provide funding for the conductive education project set up by the Birmingham education (special needs and welfare) sub-committee in September 1984.

Mr. Whitney: This particular project is not being supported, but we are considering an application from the Spastics Society for assistance in funding a project to determine whether conductive education might be adapted for use in this country.

Disabled People (Representations)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has not sent NETWORK, the legal advisory service for disabled people, the consultation paper on the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Bill; if he will now do so; and if he will allow an extension beyond 4 March for the submission of their comments.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Claimants

Mr. Terry Fields asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide a break-down of the number of social security claimants in Liverpool, Broadgreen, in each year since 1979, broken down to include; persons under pensionable age excluding the unemployed, unemployed persons and persons over pensionable age.

Mr. Major: Liverpool, Broadgreen is covered for social security purposes by the Department's offices at West Derby, Breckfield, Belle Vale and Edge Hill, but boundaries are not conterminous with the constituency.

The table shows the total number of people in receipt of supplementary benefit from these offices who were *(a)* under pension age, excluding the unemployed *(b)* unemployed and *(c)* over pension age in December of each year since 1981—the earliest available figures.

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
(a) Supplementary benefit claimants under pension age but not unemployed	8,227	8,623	9,838	11,794	12,555
(b) Supplementary benefit claimants unemployed	17,724	19,176	20,434	21,063	21,696
(c) Supplementary benefit claimants over pension age	13,877	13,892	11,882	11,880	12,153

Single Payments

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list for each of the last five years the number and the total value in each of these years of single payments made to claimants for draught-proofing.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is as follows:

Single Payments of Supplementary Benefit for Draught-Proofing Materials

	Number (000s)	*Value £ (000s)*
1981	<1	15
1982	2·5	56
1983	9	181

Source: Annual Statistical Enquiry for December of the relevant year.
Note: Because these figures relate to single payments made during the 12 months preceding the date of each enquiry to people still in receipt of supplementary benefit at the time of that enquiry, they are underestimates of the total number and value of single payments made during the year. Figures are not yet available for 1984 and 1985.

Cervical Screening

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list separately those district health authorities mentioned in paragraph 4.27 of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on National Health Service preventive medicine which *(a)* had no district call or recall schemes in operation, *(b)* had reported limited recall covering part of their areas, *(c)* had no firm plans for introducing schemes, *(d)* operated recall schemes only, *(e)* planned to introduce call schemes in 1985, *(f)* plan to introduce call schemes in 1986, *(g)* plan to use computerised patient registers and *(h)* already operated call and recall schemes.

Mr. Hayhoe: In reply to the hon. Member's first three questions lists of district health authorities are shown in appendix 8 of the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on "NHS: Preventive Medicine."

Those health authorities which in June 1985 operated recall schemes only are shown in table 1, those which planned to introduce call schemes during 1985 are shown in table 2, and those planning to introduce call schemes in 1986 in table 3.

All district health authorities listed in tables 2 and 3 can be expected to use computerised registers; in June 1985 details were still under discussion in some authorities. As regards those health authorities already operating call and recall schemes I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 3 February at columns *87-88*.

Table 1

Health authorities which in June 1985 operated schemes for recall only

Northern Region
Darlington
Durham
East Cumbria
Gateshead
Newcastle
North Tees
North Tyneside
North West Durham
South Cumbria
South Tees
South Tyneside
Sunderland
West Cumbria

North Western Region
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley
Bolton
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale
Bury
Central Manchester
Chorley and South Ribble
Lancaster
Oldham
Rochdale
South Manchester
Tameside and Glossop
Trafford
West Lancashire
Wigan

Yorkshire Region
Airedale
Bradford
Calderdale
Dewesbury
East Yorkshire
Grimsby
Harrogate
Huddersfield
Hull
Leeds Eastern
Leeds Western
Northallerton
Pontefract
Scarborough
Scunthorpe
Wakefield
York

Mersey Region
Chester
Halton
Liverpool
Macclesfield
Southport and Formby
South Sefton
St. Helens and Knowsley
Warrington
Wirral

Trent Region
Bassetlaw
North Derbyshire
North Lincolnshire
South Derbyshire
South Lincolnshire

North West Thames Region
Barnet
Brent
Ealing
East Hertfordshire
Harrow
North Hertfordshire
North West Hertfordshire
Paddington and North Kensington
South West Hertfordshire
Victoria

South West Thames Region
Croydon
East Surrey
Merton and Sutton
South West Surrey
Wandsworth

East Anglian Region
Cambridge
East Suffolk
Great Yarmouth and Waveney
Norwich
West Norfolk and Wisbech
West Suffolk

North East Thames Region
Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Basildon and Thurrock
Enfield
Mid-Essex
Newham
North East Essex
Redbridge
Southend
Waltham Forest
West Essex

South East Thames Region
Bexley
Brighton
Bromley
Canterbury and Thanet
Dartford and Gravesham
Lewisham and North Southwark
Maidstone
Medway
South East Kent
Tunbridge Wells

Wessex Region
Basingstoke and North Hampshire
East Dorset
Isle of Wight
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Salisbury
West Dorset
Winchester

South Western Region
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly
Somerset
Southmead

Oxford Region
Kettering
Northampton
Oxfordshire
West Berkshire

West Midlands Region
Bromsgrove and Redditch
Coventry
Dudley
Herefordshire
Kidderminster and District
North Warwickshire
Rugby
Sandwell
Shropshire
Solihull
South East Staffordshire
South Warwickshire
Walsall
Wolverhampton
Worcester and District

TABLE 2

Health authorities which in June 1985 were planning to introduce call schemes during 1985

Northern Regional Health Authority
North Tees
South Tees

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
Harrogate

North Western Regional Health Authority
Central Manchester
North Manchester
South Manchester

Trent Regional Health Authority
North Derbyshire

North East Thames Regional Health Authority
Enfield

South-East Thames Regional Health Authority
Camberwell

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
Croydon
Mid-Downs
Worthing

Wessex Regional Health Authority
Portsmouth and South East Hampshire
Winchester

Oxford Regional Health Authority
Aylesbury
East Berkshire
Kettering
Milton Keynes
Northampton
Wycombe

South Western Regional Health Authority
Cheltenham
Gloucester
Plymouth

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
North Staffordshire

TABLE 3

Health authorities which in June 1985 were planning to inrroduce call schemes during 1986

Northern Regional Health Authority
Darlington
West Cumbria
Gateshead
Hartlepool
North Tyneside
Northumberland

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority
Airedale
Bradford
East Yorkshire
Pontefract

Mersey Regional Health Authority
St. Helens and Knowsley

North Western Regional Health Authority
Bolton
Bury

Trent Regional Health Authority
Bassetlaw
Central Nottinghamshire
Nottingham
Southern Derbyshire

North West Thames Regional Health Authority
Barnet
Brent
Harrow
Hillingdon
North Hertfordshire

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
Bromley
Lewisham and North Southwark

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
Kingston and Esher
Mid Surrey

Wessex Regional Health Authority
Basingstoke and North Hampshire
East Dorset
Southampton and South West Hampshire
Swindon

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Bromsgrove and Redditch
Central Birmingham
North Birmingham
Sandwell
Solihull
South Birmingham
South East Staffordshire
West Birmingham

Supplementary Benefit Regulations

Mr. Richard Shepherd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to amend the supplementary benefit regulations.

Mr. Newton: A number of changes in the supplementary benefit regulations will be required to give effect to the uprating of benefits rates in July. My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Social Services, has also referred today for consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee draft regulations amending the rules for single payments.

Following is the covering note sent with the reference of the draft regulations to the Committee.

"PROPOSED CHANGES IN SUPPLEMENTARY BENEFIT SINGLE PAYMENTS REGULATIONS

Note for Social Security Advisory Committee

The Committee is invited to consider changes to the single payments regulations contained in the attached draft Supplementary Benefit (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations.

As the Committee is aware, the present single payments regulations came into being as part of the wider changes introduced in 1980 when the supplementary benefit scheme was put on the basis of regulated entitlement. Under this Government there have been substantial improvements in weekly benefit rates. Since 1978-79 their real value has risen by 6 per cent., while other changes have raised the real value of weekly heating additions by some £140 million. In 1980 itself, an improved pattern of children's scale rates was introduced with the result that support for children in supplementary benefit families is now estimated to be some £150 million higher in real terms than if the previous value and structure had been retained. At the same time, lone parents, and the long-term sick and disabled, started to receive the higher "long-term" rate of benefit after one year instead of two. Further beneficial changes have taken place subsequently including in particular the ending of the "invalidity trap" in 1983.

Despite these improvements, there has been since 1981 a rapid and continuing growth in single payments. They have risen from less than 1 million payments totalling some £45 million in 1981 to over 4 million payments totalling over £300 million in 1985.

The Government do not believe that this rate of increase can be either justified or sustained. It is imposing a disproportionately heavy administrative burden on DHSS local offices. It is aggravating the widely perceived unfairness of the contrast between the position of those in supplementary benefit and those who may have incomes only very little higher, including those in low-paid jobs, to whom no comparable help is available. Moreover, there are clear indications that this trend is continuing.

In these circumstances the Government now propose to take steps to bring expenditure back to around the 1984 level—the last full year before the present Social Security Review proposals were published—and to ensure an orderly administration of the single payments system in the two years before the Government reform proposals take effect.

The main changes which would be brought about by the proposed regulations are as follows:

—the list of eligible items for furniture to be revised with standard sums in a national price list;

—help with furniture for people moving to be linked more clearly to the reasons for a move which qualify for payment of removal expenses;

—the abolition of the condition that prevents payments for furniture for certain movers where there is suitable alternative furnished accommodation available, and the clarification of the position of people moving from special care accommodation;

—the introduction of a standard sum, based on the size of the family, for qualifying movers towards miscellaneous furniture and household equipment needs;

—help with replacement of furniture to be subject to time limits for initial and repeat payments other than on health and safety grounds, except for those over pension age and the chronically sick and disabled;

—revision of help with maternity needs, with prescribed sums and quantities;

—bedding to be provided for those with a good reason for move and to elderly or sick or disabled members of the family;

—limiting of help with costs of redecoration materials to those over pension age and the chronically sick or disabled;

—revised rules for payments for clothing and footwear.

No changes are proposed in the regulation covering exceptionally severe weather payments which the Government are keeping under review in the light of experience this winter, nor in the rules for payments for draughtproofing where Ministers are considering alternative arrangements with other interested Departments.

At Annex 1 is an explanatory note on the draft regulations and at Annex 2 are the draft regulations themselves."

Copies of the note with the annexes are in the Vote Office.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 25 February 1986.

THE ARTS

Liverpool Philharmonic Hall

Mr. Hind asked the Minister for the Arts whether the Liverpool philharmonic hall will be transferred to the Merseyside Residuary Body on 1 April.

Mr. Luce: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will soon lay before this House a property order which will include a provision transferring the hall to the Merseyside Residuary Body on 1 April. The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Society is currently establishing a charitable trust which could subsequently be responsible for the hall. I am sure that the Residuary Body will wish to consult with the trust and other interested parties before deciding on final arrangements for the ownership and management of the hall.

We took the decision to transfer the hall to the Residuary Body in the light of the Arts Council committing itself to provide an additional grant of £137,500 to the Society. This will enable the society in 1986-87 to pay rent to the Residuary Body for the use of the hall. The Residuary Body will meet the balance of the running costs of the hall, recovering those costs through the districts, until such time as final decisions are taken on the ownership and management of the hall. I hope that the longer term future of he hall will be secured with continuing financial assistance from the Arts Council, the five district councils and, wherever possible, the private sector.

SCOTLAND

Boundary Reviews

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Boundary Commission for Scotland intends to conduct any interim reviews of Parliamentary constituencies.

Mr. Rifkind: The Boundary Commission for Scotland has informed me that it intends to conduct an interim review of 14 parliamentary constituencies under section 2(3) of the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1949. The constituencies are as follows:

Dumbarton CC and Stirling CC
East Lothian CC, and Roxburgh and Berwickshire CC
Hamilton BC anc East Kilbride CC
Ayr CC and Cunninghame South CC
Clackmannan CC, and Perth and Kinross CC
Edinburgh South BC and Midlothian CC
Strathkelvin and Bearsden CC, and Clydebank and Milngavie CC.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Departmental Staff

Mr. Watts asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff-in-post in central Government Departments at 1 January.

Mr. MacGregor: At 1 January 1986 there were 596,506 staff in post — 497,895 non-industrials and 98,611 industrials.

WALES

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table indicating the expenditure levels forecast for each district health authority in Wales for the coming financial year, together with comparable expenditure for each of the preceeding five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The following table provides the actual outturn expenditure on hospitals and community health services by health authorities in Wales for the years 1981-82 to 1984-85. The figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are provisional forecasts of outturn since they do not take account of all of the income which might be generated locally. Nordo they reflect possible movements in balances. Furthermore, the figures for 1986-87 do not take account of a further £13 million which will be allocated for centrally funded developments during the course of the year. It is therefore not possible to make a direct comparison between the provisional figures given for 1986-87 and those given for the preceeding years.

£ million

	1981-82	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Clwd	62·143	66·761	69·142	76·112	83·556	85·677
East Dyfed	49·287	40·972	44·761	48·280	49·820	52·779
Pembrokeshire		13·228	14·608	16·423	17·432	18·629
Gwent	76·003	83·434	88·186	93·380	97·615	103·305
Gwynedd	35·175	38·175	41·056	47·015	48·850	50·643
Mid Glamorgan	86·121	92·912	99·230	107·035	118·130	120·245
Powys	17·169	19·063	20·308	21·575	22·894	23·898
South Glamorgan	104·295	112·869	119·513	125·558	131·413	136·959
West Glamorgan	59·178	64·422	67·464	73·926	84·375	89·011
Total	489·371	531·836	564·450	609·304	654·085	681·146

Notes:

1. Payments made centrally on behalf of health authorities for income tax, national insurance and superannuation have been included.
2. Prior to 1982-83 the Dyfed area health authority covered the whole county.
3. From 1 April 1985, the responsibility for family practitioner services was transferred from health authorities to independent family practitioner committees. Expenditure on these services has therefore been excluded from the figures provided.

Welsh Language

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters his Department received during 1985 concerning the status of the Welsh language; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cancer

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will take steps to arrange for the first report of the Welsh cancer registry, entitled "Cancer Registration in Wales 1974-1978," to be republished in a form which analyses the data in espect of wards and enumeration districts.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There are no plans to republish the first report of the Welsh cancer registry in the form requested.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many women in Wales were diagnosed during 1985 to be suffering from breast cancer; and how many died from breast cancer during 1985.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information is given in the following table:

	Year of registration/ death	
	1983	*1984*
Registration of newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer	1,331	—*
Number of deaths due to breast cancer	748	806

* Not available.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made by his Department in improving services for cancer patients in northern Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A departmental working party was appointed to report to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on regional services in North Wales, including services for cancer patients. Its recommendations are presently being considered.

Rural Areas

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to give the Welsh Development Agency greater scope for assisting rural areas by way of grants and other measures along the lines of those presently available to Mid-Wales Development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no plans to extend Mid-Wales development grant beyond its present scope, but my officials, the Welsh Development Agency and Mid-Wales Development are considering further programmes to help job creation and business activity in the rural areas and I hope to announce details within the next few weeks.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people were employed in Wales, by county, part-time and full-time, male, female, and under 25 years of age, at the latest available date; and how these figures compare with the comparable figures in 1982 and 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information for the date requested is not available. However, information for the Welsh counties and Wales is given in the table. These are employees of all ages, an analysis by age not being available. The figures relate to June 1978 and September 1981, the latest dates for which data are available. Comparisons between these two dates will be affected by seasonal factors.

All Employees in Employment

	Part-time	*Full-time*	*Male employees*	*Female employees*
June 1978				
Clwyd	23,800	103,900	78,600	49,100
Dyfed	18,300	87,200	65,600	39,800
Gwent	27,400	139,600	104,000	63,000
Gwynedd	12,900	56,900	41,700	28,100
Mid-Glamorgan	30,800	155,400	109,900	76,300
Powys	6,300	23,400	17,900	11,800
South Glamorgan	32,800	135,900	96,000	72,700
West Glamorgan	25,400	135,400	99,500	61,300
Wales	177,800	837,600	613,200	402,100

All Employees in Employment

	Part-time	*Full-time*	*Male employees*	*Female employees*
September 1981				
Clwyd	24,000	88,800	65,900	46,900
Dyfed	19,300	80,000	61,100	38,200
Gwent	27,200	123,000	89,700	60,500
Gwynedd	14,400	52,700	38,600	28,500
Mid Glamorgan	27,400	135,500	96,000	66,900
Powys	6,600	22,300	16,900	12,100
South Glamorgan	33,300	128,700	90,400	71,600
West Glamorgan	28,900	114,900	82,900	61,000
Wales	181,300	745,900	541,600	385,600

Source:
Department of Employment.
Census of Employment.

PRIME MINISTER

Fordyce

Q21. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Prime Minister if she will pay an official visit to Fordyce in the Banff and Buchan district area.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Carers (Policy)

Q48. **Sir David Price** asked the Prime Minister whether she will review Her Majesty's Government's policies towards caring for the carers; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government attach great importance to promoting measures which enhance and support the capacity and well-bing of carers, and this aspect is borne in mind in the development of all relevant policies. Apart from encouraging those providing health and personal social services to take account of the needs of informal carers in their planning and provision of services and making grants to carers' organisations, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services has launched an initiative, "Helping the Community to Care" which is designed to explore and improve the quality of support given to carers by statutory and voluntary bodies.

Economy (Wales)

Q92. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Prime Minister what further steps Her Majesty's Government intend taking to improve the economic well-being of Wales.

The Prime Minister: The Government will maintain their efforts to rebuild a sound and competitive economy, giving priority to the control of inflation, encouraging enterprise and seeking to keep wage increases to a level that will enable economic growth to be translated into increased employment, while improving the infrastructure and encouraging the development of business in Wales.

Nationalised Industries

Q95. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to meet the chairmen of nationalised industries to discuss the financing of the nationalised industries; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I met the chairmen of the nationalised industries last November. The capital requirements and financing of the nationalised industries for 1986-87 to 1988-89 can be found in part five of the public expenditure White Paper published last month (Cmnd. 9702-II).

Disabled People

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister if she will make it her policy to increase the resources available to improve services for disabled people; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The Government have made it clear in guidance issued to health and local authorities, who are the main statutory providers of services for disabled people, that services for the most vulnerable groups in the community, including disabled people, should have priority. It is for individual health and local authorities to determine local priorities in light of their statutory responsibilities and local circumstances.

However, although it is not practicable to calculate the total amount spent on services for disabled people, overall expenditure on a number of services which particularly benefit them has substantially increased in real terms over recent years. For example, on the basis of 1984-85 prices, there was an 85 per cent. cost terms increase in local authority expenditure in England on homes for mentally handicapped adults between 1978-79 and 1984-85 and an increase of 39 per cent. over the same period in local authority expenditure in England on aids for disabled people.

With regard to social security benefits, total expenditure on all cash benefits for long term sick and disabled people in 1985-86 will be over £5 billion. This represents an increase in real terms of over 50 per cent. since 1978-79, of which some £380 million is due to real improvements in the average value of benefits paid.

Fraud (Prosecution)

Mr. Cohen asked the Prime Minister if any of the cases of fraud not prosecuted because of the difficulty of obtaining evidence to which she referred in her interview with CBI News involve public money, including Bank of England money.

The Prime Minister: Certain fraud investigations have been hindered by difficulties in obtaining evidence, in particular evidence from abroad. It is, however, hoped that these difficulties will be overcome and that the cases will be brought to trial. I am aware of four such cases, currently under investigation, in which the misappropriation of public money is involved.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Brunivels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

Mr. Boyes asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 25 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with minsterial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Proctor asked the Prime Minister what is the longest period of time between her giving a holding answer to a priority written question and her giving the substantive answer over the last 12 months.

The Prime Minister: Records show that the longest such period was 10 working days, although this was an exceptional case involving the compilation of detailed statistical tables. It is my normal practice to answer all priority written questions on the day for which they are tabled, but if it is ever necessary to put in a holding reply, to answer as soon as practicable thereafter.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Domestic Security Devices

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies his Department has made of the implications for crime prevention of changes in the price of domestic security devices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None. However, we are aware that cost may well be a factor in influencing whether or not the public fit domestic security devices. The extent to which this is generally the case is currently being investigated by the Home Office crime prevention unit in the Surrey constabulary area with the assistance of the chief constable.

Moreover, the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention, through its working group on residential burglary, is seeking to devise a low-cost security package to protect residential dwellings which might be purchased by those living in particularly vulnerable areas such as the inner city.

Terrorism

Mr. Kaufman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1985 for periods in excess of 96 hours; how many persons so detained were charged with any offence; how many persons so detained were convicted of an offence; of which offences they were convicted; and how many persons were so convicted on the basis of evidence obtained by virtue of their detention in excess of 96 hours.

Mr. Hurd: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Open Prisons (Payphones)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what will be his policy regarding permission given to inmates of open prisons to obtain, through the relevant governors, lists of telephone numbers of doctors or solicitors when payphones are introduced at the end of April.

Mr. Mellor: The present arrangements by which inmates are provided with names and addresses of solicitors will be extended to cover telephone numbers. Inmates wanting the telephone numbers of doctors will be required to apply to the governor, who may obtain the information for them unless he suspects an improper motive.

Crossbows

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had about the potential danger arising from the unrestricted sale of crossbows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Since January 1985 we have received 22 letters about crossbows from hon. Members and 19 from members of the public. I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Miss Fookes) on 3 February, at column 5.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *124-25*, he will give the same information regarding arrests at Wapping, and police deployment on Saturday 22 February, for the period 18 to 24 February.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that a further 62 arrests were made in the period up to 2 pm on 24 February. 135 officers were deployed on 22 February.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any special civil defence precaution and protection are envisaged for nuclear dumps run by NIREX; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government advocate an all hazards approach by civil defence planners, but no special civil defence plans in support of NIREX waste disposal sites are considered necessary.

Civil Defence

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what capital expenditure has been incurred by his Department since 1979 on the construction or adaptation of sub-regional headquarters and zone headquarters;

(2) what current expenditure has been incurred by his Department since 1979 on the maintenance of sub-regional headquarters and zone headquarters.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is not kept in the form requested. I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why he decided to close the former sub-region 61 emergency headquarters at Dover.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The headquarters at Dover, which served as a communications centre, could not be refurbished at an economic cost.

Victim Compensation Schemes

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action the Government intend to seek to encourage the development of schemes for reparation between victim and offender.

Mr. Hurd: We have been observing the development of such schemes with great interest and are providing

funding for four experimental projects. As a contribution to public debate and to help in reaching a view on the place of reparation in the criminal justice system, we have prepared a consultative document which is published today. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library and in the Vote Office. The document describes existing experimental schemes and the issues of principle and practice which they raise and invites views on these and on the adequacy of the courts' existing powers.

Visa Requirements

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what countries whose citizens do not require visas to enter Britain impose visa requirements on British citizens.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Sir Biggs-Davison) on 21 November 1985 at columns *269-70*.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tanzania

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what specific projects his Department has provided finance for which will improve the development prospects of Tanzania; and what are the sums of money involved.

Mr. Raison: Our largest project in Tanzania is the Songea-Makambako road. This was completed last year at a total cost of £90 million and is to be followed by the establishment of a post-construction maintenance unit (£2·8 million). Other major projects under way are the southern regions health project (£9·4 million) covering the Mbeya referral hospital, and the provision of medical specialists and rural health centres; a rural development project in Lindi-Mtwara (£2·8 million); and grain stores (£4·7 million). In addition, we are involved in other smaller rural development projects (in pest control, the clove industry, land surveys and dairy production in West Kilimangaro) and in a hospital in Zanzibar. We support with technical co-operation science departments in universities in Tanzania, English language teaching and the Tanzania Harbour Authority.

ENVIRONMENT

Local Plans

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the directions, concerning proposed local plans, that have been issued by his Department since May 1979, give the date, to local authorities under section 14(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: One direction has been issued by my Department under section 14(3) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. This was given on 28 January 1986 to the London borough of Southwark in respect of the north Southwark local plan. A direction under section 14(3A) of the Act was given to Berwick-upon-Tweed borough council on 20 February 1985 in respect of the Berwick-upon-Tweed town local plan.

National Parks (Land Disposal)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to introduce measures to ensure that national park authorities sell all the land they own, apart from that required for information centres, car parks and other such purposes.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. We believe that national park authorities should pursue their responsibilities where possible without holding land themselves. However, we recognise that there may be good reason, in some circumstances, for them to retain land in their ownership.

Property Services Agency

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* in respect of each local authority in partnership programme and in respect of each other designated district the amount of unused land in the ownership of the Property Services Agency.

Sir George Young: The information is not readily available; but the PSA's policy is to retain only that land for which it has a use. Surplus land is disposed of as quickly as possible.

Local Government Reform

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the voluntary bodies that will receive the total of £1·388 million allocation to Lambeth for voluntary groups following the abolition of the Greater London council; and how much grant each body will receive.

Sir George Young: The Secretary of State has accepted the following projects as eligible for transitional grant support in the London borough of Lambeth, and for the maximum amounts specified. However, it is for Lambeth council to decide which of these organisations should receive support under the transitional grant scheme, and the precise sum to be allocated to each, up to the allocation limit of £1,388 million.

London borough of Lambeth
Approved transitional grants to voluntary organisations
1986-87 to 1989-90

Project number	*Organisation*	*Maximum grant* £
019	New Education and Recreation Association —Basketball Development Programme	29,571
022	Original Mixture Theatre—Shows and Workshops	2,496
023	Staunch Poets and Players: Artistic Programme	1,170
031	Oval House Music School	13,593
032	Blackfriars Photography Project	9,736
033	L'Ouverture Theatre Company	12,012
036	Common Lore Storytellers and Musicians	13,143
038	Brixton Festival Organisation: Festival and Carnival	13,095
044	Brixton Arts, Culture and Carnival Committee—Music Workshop	15,392
095	Young Vic Theatre	37,533
096	Loose Change Theatre—Trojan Landscape	3,968
001A	Black Articled Clerk Scheme	7,160
002	Waterloo Action Centre	14,463
003	Stockwell Women's Lift Service	55,449

Project number	Organisation	Maximum grant £
004B	Loughborough Community Centre—Advice Centre	16,733
007	Morley College—Audio Visual and Meetings	13,938
008	Alcohol Counselling Services	28,473
009	CCRL: Lambeth Chinese Community Project	35,025
012A	Clapham CAB: Vietnamese Advice Worker	16,365
012B	CAB: Tooting Bec Hospital	30,697
015	Latin American Community Project	28,244
016A	Princes Community Centre	50,532
016B	Princes Community Youth Club	22,460
017	Afro-Caribbean Community Association	20,950
098	Brixton Action Youth Outreach	15,800
100	Stockwell and Vauxhall Neighbourhood Council—Advice and Information Service	5,240
101	Vassall Neighbourhood Council—Advice and Development Worker	9,093
103	Consortium of Ethnic Minorities—Afro Caribbean Community Transport	29,541
104	Lambeth Methodist Mission—Vauxhall Action for the Homeless	10,993
108	Myatts Field Community Centre	36,937
110	West Indian Ex-Serviceman's Association	24,828
084	Lambeth Co-Operative Development Agency	21,278
085	Lady Margaret Hall Settlement—Lambeth Women and Work Project	40,774
086	Women's Motor Mechanics Workshop Ltd.	108,160
087	Waterloo Employment Project	33,384
088	Lady Margaret Hall Settlement	21,024
111	Brixton Young Families Housing Aid Association—BYFHAA Workshops Ltd.	140,206
077	St. Matthews Estate TA and People for People Good Neighbourhood Project	12,707
078	Black Roof Co-Op Ltd.	14,583
079	Society for Co-Operative Dwellings Ltd.	28,998
082	Asian Sheltered Residential Accommodation—Greater London Housing Association Ltd.	31,040
083	Bondway Housing Association/Shelter	16,369
035	Monochrome Womens Photography Collective	12,272
052	Camberwell Circle Club	4,613
056	Age Concern Lambeth—Leisure Activities Project	13,373
063	ASRA Dial-a-Ride	35,461
075	Consortium Ltd.—Development Worker	6,512
TF/004A	Loughborough Community Centre (Creche)	30,588
046	Lambeth Mobile Creche Project	136,784
047	Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme	17,512
049	Myatts Fields Mobile Creche	80,126
050	Lilford Community Day Care Centre	50,091
051	Dr. Barnado's: Brixton Sharing Care	82,871
055	Weir Day Centre and Club for Over 60s	6,115
057	Lambeth Caring Houses Trust Support Group Homes for Chronically/Mentally Ill	13,456
058	Lambeth Accord	12,006
059	Ashrain Asian Day Care	11,481
060	Brixton Circle Project	10,196
064	Lambeth Under 5s Campaign	23,547
065	Knights Hill Day Nursery	13,685
066	Latin American Children's Project	16,907
067	Brixton Circle Project	44,788
069	Black Women's Centre	11,960
070A	Clapham and Larkhall Under 5s Organisation	13,738
070B	Clapham and Larkhall Under 5s Organisation	31,075
071	Lambeth Women and Children's Health Bus	48,907
073	Streatham Opportunity Group	14,222
074	Clapham Women's Aid	39,909
076	One Love Children's Centre	18,725
081	NACRO	30,730
099	Angell Loughborough After School Project	14,186
091	Waterloo Community Development Group	10,969
092	Coin Street Community Builders (Information Officer)	9,651
107	Vauxhall Cross Amenity Trust	36,224
024	Zuriya Theatre Company—Zuriya African Arts and Theatre Project	28,080
027	West Indian Festival of Art and Culture	3,588
034	London Wall Mural Group	13,661
041	Corpus Christi Adventure Holiday	520
010	Brixton Music Development	21,079
026	The Cinema Museum	2,600
	TOTAL	2,065,361

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his proposals for the future of the Greater London council's seaside and country homes after the abolition of the council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Havant (Mr. Lloyd) on 20 February, at columns 334-35.

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to lay before the House his report under section 7(2) of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend has today laid his report and arranged for copies to be available in the Vote Office.

Urban Aid

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the practice of his Department's urban housing renewal units regarding notification to the local authority's elected members if they are to visit housing estates in their areas.

Sir George Young: The Department's letters to chief executives of local authorities offering a visit by the urban housing renewal unit made it clear that the unit would be glad to meet with elected members if they so wish. It is for the local authorities to decide on the extent to which elected members should be involved in the unit's visits.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now formally notify Portsmouth city council of its entitlement to submit a bid for urban aid; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Caravan Sites

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement as to his policy towards the placing of new caravan sites *(a)* in areas of outstanding natural beauty, *(b)* in areas of great landscape value and *(c)* along the heritage coastline; and what advice

he has issued to the Camping and Caravanning Club with regard to consultations with local authorities before the issuing of licences in areas as above.

Mrs. Rumbold: New caravan sites are subject to the requirements of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 which prohibits the issue of a licence unless the site has the benefit of planning permission. Schedule 1 to the Act, however, sets out circumstances in which a site licence is not required and there is no statutory requirement to consult the local planning authority in such cases. No specific advice has been given to the Camping and Caravanning Club on this subject.

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will review the provisions of the Camping and Caravanning Act 1980 in the light of the granting of licences by the Camping and Caravanning Club without prior consultation with local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Camping and Caravanning Club is authorised by a certificate of exemption granted under paragraph 12 of schedule 1 to the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, to approve sites for use by not more than five caravans at a time without the need for a site licence. This was reviewed in 1980 following a public consultation exercise, and the Government proposed that legislation should be introduced eventually to require exempted organisations to notify the local planning authority prior to approval of such sites.

GLC (Technical and Professional Services)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the London Residuary Body's review of the Greater London council's technical and professional services required by paragraph 8, schedule 13 of the Local Government Act 1985.

Mr. Tracey: The London Residuary Body's report was received today and I am arranging for a copy to be placed in the Library.

Citadels

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current use of each of the second world war citadels sited at Dollis hill, station Z Harrow, Curzon street house, W1, Faraday building, EC4, Montague house, SW1, Broad Sanctuary, SW1, South Kensington, Horseferry road, and Horseguards Parade (Admiralty citadel).

Sir George Young: Of the nine second world war citadels, only five remain on the Government estate and are sued for various operational purposes in conjunction with the Government buildings of which they now form part.

Radioactive Pollution

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government have submitted their report to the Paris commission outlining the measures being taken to meet the commission's 1984 recommendation that the best available technology should be taken into account in minimising radioactive discharges to the marine environment from nuclear reprocessing plants.

Mr. Waldegrave: A report by the United Kingdom was submitted to the Paris commission on 24 February 1986. I have placed copies in the Library of the House.

Sellafield (Safety Audit)

Mr. Hayes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Radio Chemical Inspectorate will be associated with the Health and Safety Executive's safety audit of Sellafield.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have today asked their inspectors to collaborate with the Health and Safety Executive and to report to them on the adequacy and effectiveness of arrangements and procedures relating to releases of radioactivity from the British Nuclear Fuels Sellafield site.

National Heritage Memorial Fund

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, further to his reply of 20 February, *Official Report*, column *340*, he will give further details of the financing of the additional resources he has announced for the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimate, this will be financed by an increase of £9·5 million in the cash limit for Class VIII, Vote 4 from £70·42 million to £79·92 million, and from £1·0 million savings within that Vote. The cash limit for the DOE-NTI cash block is being reduced by £10·962 million, from £115·53million to £126·492 million, £1·462 million of which is being used to offset the additional capital allocation to Bradford city council as I announced in reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, North (Mr. Lawler) on 7 February, at column *264*.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Milk Quotas

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he will re-issue more of the milk quota under the outgoers scheme in England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: I announced in July last year that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I aimed to make further allocations of quota to three categories of producer in 1986-87. I am glad to say that it will now be possible to enable these allocations to be made, ahead of schedule, in 1985-86.

The first group of producers we are helping comprises those whose development awards represented a high proportion of their total quota. These producers were particularly hard-hit by the 35 per cent. cutback on those awards. They will now have sufficient quota restored to them to ensure that they have at least 90 per cent. of the total quota which they would have had if there had been no cutback.

The second group comprises small producers with development awards. We shall now be ending completely the 35 per cent. cutback on development awards for all producers with quotas of up to 200,000 litres. At the same time, we shall restore to 200,000 litres the quotas of other producers who have been reduced below this level by the cutback. To avoid anomalies, no producer benefiting from this provision will have his quota increased beyond the 200,000 litre mark.

The third group we are helping includes producers with land which was expropriated by public authorities, but which will be returned to dairying by 31 March 1989.

Arrangements are also being made to allocate quota to certain institutions which used milk from their own herds in their catering arrangements before the introduction, last November, of additional restrictions on the use of unpasteurised milk.

Soil Survey

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has yet reached a decision on his Department's future funding of the Soil Survey of England and Wales.

Mr. Jopling: In January 1985 I announced, in accordance with the advice of the Priorities Board, that, while the Ministry's commission with the Soil Survey would be unchanged in 1985-86, it would be set at half its current level in 1986-87. This early notification was intended to give the Soil Survey and the Agricultural and Food Research Council an opportunity to explore the possibility of alternative sources of income for future years. The Soil Survey has responded positively to the challenge of securing funds through a wider range of commercial contracts and the Priorities Board has now given further consideration to the funding of the Soil Survey beyond 1986-87. In accordance with the board's recommendations, I have decided that the Ministry should continue to commission work with the Soil Survey at levels of £650,000 in 1987-88 and £500,000 in 1988-89. The needs of my Department beyond this period will be reviewed at the appropriate time and the Priorities Board will again be consulted.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Marek asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the length of agreements made between his Department and farmers proposed for environmentally sensitive areas; whether the payments will fully take into account inflation on a yearly basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner *[pursuant to her reply,* 24 February 1986, c. *426]*: We are awaiting the outcome of the consultations for which clause 12 of the Agriculture Bill provides before deciding on detailed arrangements.

Falkland Islands (Fishing Resources)

Mr. Randall asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he intends to submit a programme to the EEC Commission in order to seek to attract funds for the development of fishing resources of the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: I have been asked to reply.

I have no plans to do so. The choice of projects to be financed from European Community aid funds is primarily a matter for the Falkland Islands Government and the European Commission. Some assistance from the fourth European development fund has been given to assess the feasibility of salmon ranching.

In the common fisheries policy there is provision for assistance from Community and national funds for exploratory voyages by Community fishing vessels in certain circumstances. Were the Government to receive an application for such assistance for a voyage to the Falkland Islands from a British vessel owner, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food would give it sympathetic consideration with a view to seeking the necessary Commission approval.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Birkenhead and Barrow Shipyards

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his policy towards the maintenance of the existing terms and conditions of employment of the work force at the Birkenhead and Barrow warship yards, including pension arrangements, following the proposed privatisation of those yards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) on 24 February, at column *419*.

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what is his policy towards the involvement of employees in the privatisation of the Barrow and Birkenhead warship yards;

(2) what priority he proposes to attach to local employee and local community participation in considering the employee consortium's buy-out proposals for the Barrow and Birkenhead warship yards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what criteria other than price he intends to apply when judging rival bids for the Barrow and Birkenhead warship yards next week.

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to attach a high priority to regional control and management and investment in the north-west when he considers bids for Barrow and Birkenhead warship yards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Government have made it clear that they welcome bids from all interested parties who have the necessary skill, finance and commercial attributes to make a success of the business. Commercial considerations of this sort will be paramount in the assessment of bids for Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether nuclear waste dumps established by NIREX would be eligible for regional aid if located in the appropriate areas.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Financial Services Bill

Mr. Dykes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement about the regulation of individuals under the Financial Services Bill.

Mr. Howard: I have received from the Marketing of Investment Board organising committee and the Securities and Investment Board a joint proposal that the Financial Services Bill should be amended so as to provide additional powers to maintain a comprehensive register of individuals employed in investment businesses, in order to allow for the registration of all those involved in selling life assurance and unit trusts. The board and the committee have today published their joint proposal and I would very much welcome within the next month the views of interested parties on its proposals. At this stage, I would hope that such representations would concentrate on the proposal to provide additional powers under the Bill, rather than on the details of the particular registration scheme outlined in the proposal.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Community Service Projects

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's support for community service projects in Northern Ireland; and whether he has any plans to extend or develop his Department's work in this area;

(2) if he will estimate how many people have been involved in community service schemes supported by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 20 February 1986 at column 266. My Department will continue to give support, within available resources, for the wide range of projects through which people in Northern Ireland are able to provide service to the community.

Strip Searches

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many strip searches were made of female prisoners in Her Majesty's prison, Armagh, in January; if he will give the number of persons involved and the number of times each person was searched; whether any prison contraband, smuggled item or illegal correspondence was discovered in any search, indicating which items; in how many cases prisoners refused to be searched and had to be restrained while the search was being conducted; and if he will indicate the reasons for the search, namely, making an appearance at Armagh courthouse on remand, attending trial, inter-prison visit or other reasons.

Mr. Scott: During January 1986, a total of 49 searches was carried out on 27 prisoners; eight prisoners were searched once, 16 were searched twice, and three prisoners were searched on three occasions. No prohibited article was found during these searches, and no prisoner refused to be searched. Searches were carried out in the following circumstances:

	Number
First admission on remand or whilst awaiting trial	10
First admission on sentence or on final discharge	19
Attending remand courts	2
Bail Court appearances	10
Going on, or returning from, home leave	8
Total	49

Ulster Defence Regiment and Royal Ulster Constabulary

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes have been made in the operational and other procedures of the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the terms of paragraph 8 of the joint communiqué of the third meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council at the level of Heads of Government, Cmnd. 9657.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c. *523*]: The Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding are committed to the principle that under the rule of law the armed forces, which include the Ulster Defence Regiment, operate only in support of the civil power. They are moving as fast as operational deployments and manpower constraints will allow to ensuring that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there will be a Royal Ulster Constabulary presence with all army patrols engaged on duties which are likely to bring them into direct contact with members of the public.

A working party established by the Chief Constable has for sometime been engaged on the preparation of a code of conduct for the Royal Ulster Constabulary; it aims to complete this work as soon as possible.

A leaflet providing guidance on complaints against the conduct of members of Her Majesty's Forces in Northern Ireland has recently been made available to members of the public. It explains in simple language the procedure for making such a complaint and how that complaint will be dealt with.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Paymaster General what was the number and percentage of registered unemployed in Reading in April 1979 and the latest date for which figures are available, showing in both cases those who have been unemployed for over a year; and whether he will also publish the national average unemployment numbers and percentages for the same dates.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows the total number of unemployed claimants and the unemployment rate for the Reading travel-to-work area in January 1986, together with the number of claimants who have been unemployed for over one year at the same date. Comparable figures for April 1979 are not available because of changes in the way figures are collected. However, the table also shows the numbers of unemployed registrants and the unemployment rate for the

former Reading travel-to-work area in April 1979. The table also shows the numbers of unemployed claimants, adjusted for discontinuities, in the United Kingdom at April 1979 and January 1986. These are seasonally adjusted and exclude school-leavers.

Unemployed Claimants—January 1986

	Number	Unemployment Percentage Rate per cent.	Unemployed over one year
Reading travel-to-work area	10,856	8·0	3,352
Unemployed Registrants—April 1979			
Reading old travel-to-work area	4,382	2·5	818

Unemployed Claimants seasonally adjusted, excluding school-leavers

United Kingdom	Number	Unemployment percentage rate
April 1979	1,184,600	4·9
January 1986	3,204,900	13·2

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Paymaster General how many jobs are estimated by his Department to be available in the Reading area.

Mr. Lang: On 3 January 1986 there were 1,025 unfilled vacancies at the Reading jobcentre and 145 unfilled vacancies at the careers office. These figures cannot be added together because some vacancies are notified to both careers offices and jobcentres.

Morever, they are not a complete record of all vacancies available in the area.

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Paymaster General how many unemployed persons in Reading are currently registered at jobcentres and careers offices.

Mr. Lang: The information in respect of registrants at jobcentres is not available, because statistics of those registered at jobcentres do not distinguish those unemployed registrants from employed people seeking a change of employment. However, on 3 January 1986 there were 358 unemployed persons registered at the Reading careers office.

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many unemployed persons in Portsmouth are currently registered at jobcentres and careers offices.

Mr. Lang: The information in respect of registrants at jobcentres is not available, because statistics of those registered at jobcentres do not distinguish those unemployed registrants from employed people seeking a change of employment. However, on 3 January 1986 there were 441 unemployed persons registered at the Portsmouth careers office.

Job Vacancies (Portsmouth)

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General how many jobs are estimated by his Department to be available in the Portsmouth, South area.

Mr. Lang: Information on the total number of jobs available in the Portsmouth, South constituency is not available. However, the number of vacancies at jobcentres and careers offices is collected. On 3 January 1986 there were 197 unfilled vacancies at the Portsmouth jobcentre and 20 unfilled vacancies at the Portsmouth careers office.

Pay Levels

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General if he will list the extent to which levels of pay have risen in manufacturing industry in the west midlands each year since 1981; and if he will list the number of people on short-time working contracts in December of each year during the same period and the number of hours of overtime worked per week in the same month.

Mr. Lang: The available information is as follows:

Average gross weekly earnings of full time adult employees in manufacturing in the West Midlands*

	Percentage increase
April 1981 to April 1982	†9·5
April 1982 to April 1983	†7·5
April 1983 to April 1984	‡10·0
April 1984 to April 1985	‡8·3

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Notes:

* Orders III to XXIX of 1968 Standard Industrial Classification for 1981 to 1982 and Divisions 2 to 4 of 1980 Standard Industrial Classification for other years.

† Based on males aged 21 and over and females aged 18 and over.

‡ Based on males and females on adult rates.

Operatives in manufacturing industry in West Midlands*

Thousands

	Number stood off for whole or part of week	Hours of overtime worked
September†:		
1981	48·8	1,089·3
1982	31·2	1,094·8
1983	7·7	1,418·0
1984	7·1	1,518·4
1985	4·8	1,596·8

* All employees other than managers, works' foremen, administrative, professional, scientific, technical, clerical and sales employees. Comparable figures for employees other than operatives are not available.

† Figures for December are not available.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Paymaster General what further expenditure he is considering for schemes aimed at providing work for the long-term unemployed in the Wolverhampton area.

Mr. Lang: Our expenditure plans are set out in the White Paper "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702).

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Cash asked the Paymaster General whether he is satisfied with progress in setting up the two-year YTS.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Progress in setting up two-year YTS has been excellent. The new programme will begin on 1 April, but already some 86 per cent. of the required

places are definitely or likely to be provided. Around 86 per cent. of basic places have been found, and also 84 per cent. of premium places, which are designed to help young people and parts of the country with special needs. Our aim is to provide high quality training for young people of all abilities and circumstances, and the record shows we are well on the way to achieving that.

Wages Orders

Mr. Cash asked the Paymaster General if he will provide further information on the state of compliance by employers with wages orders.

Mr. Trippier: The best guide of the state of compliance is the number of workers found to be underpaid as a proportion of the workers whose pay is covered by all checks conducted by wages inspectors. The provisional figure for 1985 is 5·6 per cent.

In attempting to recall that statistic in order to refute the impression given by the hon. Member for Manchester, Blackley (Mr. Eastham) and other hon. Members, during the Second Reading debate on the Wages Bill on 11 February, at column 874, of widespread underpayment of workers covered by wages orders, I regret that I gave the figure of 8 per cent., which was inaccurate.

Health and Safety

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Paymaster General how many notifiable accidents and deaths, respectively, were recorded over the most recent annual period for which figures are available in the operation, respectively, of coal fired, oil fired and nuclear power stations; and how many were notified in respect of coal-mining operations.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply,* 24 February 1986]: Information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

For the electricity industry as a whole, in 1984, there were 11 deaths and 89 major injuries reported to the Health and Safety Executive arising as a result of or in connection with work activities.

Comparable figures for the coal mining industry were 19 deaths and 273 major injuries.

TRANSPORT

M3 (Widening)

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the estimated costs of widening the two-lane motorway between Popham and Bar End into a three-lane motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The cost of widening the Popham to Easton Lane section of the M3 to dual three-lane carriageways is estimated at about £24 million at current prices. This figure excludes the cost of delays to traffic. The Easton Lane to Bar End section has already been constructed to dual three-lane carriageway standard.

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the traffic density forecasts he used when deciding to construct the Popham to Bar End section of the M3 to dual two-lane standards, as distinct from the three-lane standard of the rest of the motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: At the time of the decision to construct the Popham to Easton Lane, Winchester section of the M3 as a dual two-lane motorway, the traffic flow was forecast to be up to about 43,000 vehicles per average August 16-hour day for the design year 1995. This is well within the current design capacity for a dual two-lane motorway.

Mr. John Browne asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was saved by constructing a two-lane motorway rather than a three-lane motorway on the M3 between Popham and Bar End, Winchester.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On the basis of national average rates at 1983 price levels it is estimated that to have constructed the 10 miles of the M3 from Popham to Easton Lane as a dual three-lane motorway would have cost an additional £18 million. The Easton Lane to Bar End section of the M3 has been constructed to dual three-lane standard.

Trunk Roads (Database)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Transport what stage his Department has reached in the development of a national computerised database of trunk road conditions; and if he will indicate the nature of the information which will be retained.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: A three-year project to develop a computer database began on 1 January 1986. It relates to trunk roads including motorways.

When completed the system will hold data in relation to location, layout, construction, condition, traffic, accidents, classification and bridges.

Uninsured Drivers

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any estimate of the number of vehicles in use on public roads without insurance cover.

Mr. Michael Spicer: In 1984, the most recent year for which figures are available, there were 194,378 findings of guilt by magistrates' courts in England and Wales for using a motor vehicle without having insurance covering personal injury to third parties as required by law. I am not aware of any reliable estimate of the number of vehicles actually being used without insurance.

Oadby (Traffic Congestion)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to make plans to avoid heavy traffic congestion in Oadby when the Leicester southern district distributor road stage 3 is completed; and if he will now put in hand work on the eastern district distributor road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department will consult the county on the design and construction of the junctions where the proposed county road schemes joint trunk road A6 in Oadby. Non-trunk roads are the responsibility of Leicestershire county council as highway authority.

Car Insurance (Discs)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to the mandatory display of insurance discs on car windscreens; and what representations he has received to that effect.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The use of windscreens discs to provide evidence of insurance is suggested from time to

time and has been most recently by the RAC. But, for the reasons I gave in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 29 January, at column 520, I have yet to be convinced of the value of such a system.

Roads (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there have been any studies undertaken to show that the artificial lighting of roads does or does not improve driver comfort at night.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No such studies have been undertaken.

M25 (Traffic Flows)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how current traffic flows on the M25 compare with pre-construction estimates; and if he will make a statement.

(2) if he will specify those sections of the M25 where traffic flows exceed 50,000 vehicles per day, and their direction.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information requested is set out in the table. Current flows for those sections listed relate to traffic counts taken in December 1985. The results of traffic counts on other sections will be available by the summer. The measured flows are the total numbers of vehicles travelling in both directions. There is no significant difference between the numbers travelling clockwise and anti-clockwise. In no case does a directional flow exceed 50,000 vehicles per day.

The design flow for the dual three-lane sections of the M25 was 85,000 vehicles per day. The design flow for any road is less than its maximum capacity.

Section	*Junction Numbers*	*Forecasts Flows for 1987 (000s)*		*16 Hour Average Daily Flow (000s)*
		Original	*Updated(1984)*	
A225-A2	1-2	55-75	61-80	—
A2-M20	2-3	55-70	61-74	—
M20-A21	3-4	50-60	56-64	—
A21-M26/A21	4-5	50-60	56-64	—
M26/A21-A22	5-6	50-60	56-64	54
A22-M23	6-7	50-65	56-69	62
M23-A217	7-8	50-60	56-64	—
A217-A243	8-9	40-50	44-53	58
A243-A3	9-10	45-55	50-58	60
A3-A320	10-11	55-75	61-90	77
A320-M3	11-12	65-80	72-85	89
M3-A30	12-13	60-75	67-80	—
A30-Airport Spur	13-14	70-80	78-85	—
Airport Spur-M4	14-15	70-80	78-85	—
M4-M40	15-16	60-65	67-69	59
M40-A412	16-17	55-60	61-64	58
A412-A404	17-18	55-65	61-69	58
A404-A405	18-19	65-75	72-80	66
A405-A41	19-20	45-55	50-58	Not Open
A41-M1	20-21	45-50	50-53	Not Open
M1-A6	21-22	30-35	33-37	Not Open
A6-A1(M)	22-23	40-50	44-53	Not Open
A1(M)-A111	23-24	50-55	56-58	54
A111-A10	24-25	40-45	44-48	55
A10-A121	25-26	45-50	50-53	52
A121-M11	26-27	50-60	56-64	52
M11-A12	27-28	50-60	56-64	58
A12-A127	28-29	35-40	39-42	50
A127-A13	29-30/31	35-40	39-42	47
A13-Dartford Tunnel	31-1	50-60	56-64	54

M25 (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport which of the 30 fog blackspots on the M25 recently identified are currently lit; how many of the remainder he plans to have lit; and if he will list them.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The following fog-prone sites on the M25 are lit:

River Roding crossing
River Lee crossing
Junction 5 area
Between Junctions 13 and 14
The "Paddocks" area
Junction 23 area
Junction 7 area
Between Junctions 29 and 30
Junction 25 area
Between Junctions 30 and 31
Junction 28 slip roads.

Additionally, lighting will be provided at junction 6. I am presently considering the position in relation to the remainder of the sites identified.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport which stretches of the M25 opened in 1985 and due to be opened in 1986 will be lit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Lighting has been, or will be, provided on the sections of the M25 between junctions 14 and 15 and on junctions 3, 6, 11, 15, 21, 21A and the remainder of junction 23.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total number of miles of the M25 currently lit and the number of miles unlit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are 44.5 miles currently lit and 62·55 miles unlit.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of Britain's motorways system are currently lit and how many unlit; how many additional miles of motorway are planned to be lit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: 384 miles of the English motorway system are lit and 1,101 miles unlit. It is currently planned to light a further 36 miles. The extent of motorway lighting is kept under review.

Lockheed Aircraft Company

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether Her Majesty's Government have held discussions with representatives of the Lockheed Aircraft Company about the purchase of any British airport by that company.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No. I met representatives of Lockheed Air Terminal Inc. in November 1985, when they expressed an interest in managing airports and airport terminals, but not in purchasing airports.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, following the announcement by Mr. Gorbachev on 19 December 1985 that the Soviet Union is prepared to allow on-site verification of potential nuclear testing sites, he will forthwith initiate a new series of talks with the Soviet Union on a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty.

Mr. Eggar: No. Our position on re-opening negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty remains that outstanding verification problems would have to be resolved first.

Mr. Turgut Ozal

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent visit to the United Kingdom of the Prime Minister of Turkey.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed with the Prime Minister of Turkey during his recent visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry) on 24 February at column *412*.

South Africa

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the European Economic Community Council will next discuss South Africa.

Mrs. Chalker: South Africa is expected to be one of the topics for discussion at today's meeting of EC Foreign Ministers in the Netherlands.

Central America

Mr. Terry Lewis asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held in the Foreign Affairs Council concerning the Contadora process or the Caraballeda declaration.

Mr. Eggar: None. However, within the framework of European political co-operation there is regular discussion at appropriate levels of all important issues, including Central America. On 20 January, the twelve member states of the European Community publicly welcomed the impetus given to the Contadora negotiations by the Caraballeda declaration.

Nicaragua

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by European Economic Community member states to the United States of America about its policies towards Nicaragua.

Mr. Eggar: The twelve member states of the European Community discuss all-important issues, including central America, with the United States Government which is aware of their views.

Prime Minister (Video Tape)

Mr. Tony Banks: asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what use will be made of the video tape profile and script of the Prime Minister delivered to his Department from the Central Office of Information on 21 February 1986.

Mr. Eggar: No decision has been taken on what further use will be made of this material, which was prepared in connection with the visits of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to south-east Asia and the middle east in 1985.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether any of the structure plans *(a)* approved by him or *(b)* currently before him incorporated, when originally submitted, policies seeking to prohibit the disposal or transport of nuclear waste; and what is his general policy towards the use of structure plans as a vehicle for such control of nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: A proposed alteration to the Bedfordshire structure plan and a proposed additional policy to the Humberside structure plan, submitted to my right hon. Friend for approval, oppose the disposal of nuclear waste within the boundaries of the two counties. The Bedfordshire alteration also opposes the transportation of nuclear wastes within or through the county.

My Department has pointed out to Bedfordshire and Humberside county councils that such policies, if adopted, would conflict with Government policy as set out in the 1982 White Paper "Radioactive Waste Management" regarding the need for suitable disposal facilities for low and intermediate level radioactive wastes. My Department also invited Bedfordshire county council to consider whether the proposed policy to control material transported could be regarded as a measure for the management of traffic and therefore within the functions of the structure plan. My right hon. Friend is presently considering his response. There are no policies in approved structure plans which prohibit the disposal or transport of nuclear waste.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, when announcing the list of possible sites for the disposal of nuclear waste, he will include a statement detailing, in respect of each site *(a)* his most recent assessment of public opinion in the areas concerned, *(b)* his assessment of the regional policy implications of the choice, *(c)* the implications for development blight in the area and *(d)* his assessment of the impact on other local industries; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what account he is taking in considering the list of nuclear dump sites submitted to him by NIREX on 8 January of *(a)* public opinion in the areas concerned, *(b)* regional policy, *(c)* development blight, *(d)* other local industries, *(e)* alternative sites, *(f)* the effect on the nuclear programme of not permitting dumping and *(g)* the effect on the reprocessing of nuclear waste from other countries.

Mr. Waldegrave: In considering the list of sites my right hon. Friend's main concern was to ensure that NIREX's proposals were the best way of carrying forward

the Government's policy for the management of radioactive waste. Considerations such as those mentioned by the right hon. Member will be suitable for discussion at the public inquiry into NIREX's proposals for development.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when arranging the list of possible sites for the disposal of nuclear waste, he will also publish a full list of sites considered by NIREX but rejected by either NIREX or him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when arranging the list of possible sites for the disposal of nuclear waste, he will make a statement on the effect on the reprocessing of nuclear waste from other countries of the failure to construct such a dump; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The proposed new disposal facility is needed to supplement the site at Drigg in Cumbria and to take wastes from the reprocessing of United Kingdom-produced spent fuel, from the electricity generating industry and from hospitals, research establishments and industry. The wastes from reprocessing fuel from overseas are not a factor in the decision to investigate geologically the four sites announced today.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he will consider changes to the list of sites chosen for geological exploration under a special development order;

(2) if in the light of comments received on the draft special development order to be submitted to Parliament to give NIREX planning permission to investigate geologically, he is prepared to bring forward the order in an amended form; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Any amendments to the draft special development order will be considered on their merits.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the areas from which he has received petitions against proposed nuclear dumps; and if he will state *(a)* the account he has taken of those in formulating his proposed choice of sites and *(b)* the account he has taken of them subsequently.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department's Yorkshire and Humberside regional director has recently received a petition in opposition to storage or disposal facilities for raidoactive waste in Humberside. I am aware that a similar petition has been presented to Parliament by the hon. Member. These will be taken into account before my right hon. Friend lays before the House the special development order that will authorise geological investigations of sites by NIREX. The choice of sites was for NIREX.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will delay any announcement of the list of sites for nuclear dumps until he has had time to consider the petition presented to the House on 21 February by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend will take the petition into account before he lays before the House the special development order that will authorise NIREX to undertake geological investigations at sites.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy for Ministers in his Department to receive deputations from local authorities in whose areas are situated sites proposed by NIREX for geological investigations as possible sites for nuclear dumping following the announcement of those chosen for investigations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the answer of 20 February about the NIREX list of nuclear sites, whether the representations made by hon. Members with Oxfordshire constituencies were made before or after he received the NIREX list on 8 January.

Mr. Waldegrave: Before.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has had for meetings with hon. Members representing Humberside constituencies to discuss the NIREX list of possible nuclear waste sites; and what other representations he has received from such hon. Members on this subject.

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received a number of representations from hon. Members representing Humberside constituencies, both before and since 8 January. I met the hon. Member and the hon. Members for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) on 17 December to discuss the question of sites. The hon. Member has asked subsequently for a further meeting. I reaffirm that I shall be pleased to meet hon. Members following the statement on NIREX sites by my right hon. Friend today.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, when he announces the list of possible sites for investigation as nuclear dumps, he will also publish the names of sites included in the NIREX list of 8 January.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend's statement today identified all the sites proposed to him by the chairman of NIREX on 8 January.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, when he makes the announcement next week of the list of NIREX sites mentioned in the reply of 20 February to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, he will specify which of the sites are in public ownership or owned by NIREX partners; and if he will make a statement on the criteria used to assess the implications for choice of whether the site was in public ownership, NIREX partners' ownership or private ownership, respectively.

Mr. Waldegrave: Of the sites which NIREX wishes to investigate further, those at Elstow, Bradwell and South Killingholme are owned by the CEGB. That at Fulbeck is owned by the Ministry of Defence. I understand that ownership was a factor in NIREX's choice of sites in so far as it seemed likely to affect availability.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Incomes

Mr. Meacher asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the gain or loss to those with incomes *(a)* under £5,000, *(b)* £5,000-£10,000, *(c)* £10,000-£15,000, *(d)* £15,000-£20,000, *(e)* £20,000-£30,000, *(f)* £30,000-£50,000 and *(g)* over £50,000 a year as a result of each Finance Act since 1979, both in aggregate and per person on average in each of these categories, in each case indicating how much is due to indexation and how much is real gain.

Mr. Alexander asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the value of income tax concessions to those earnings £30,000 per annum and more for each year since 1979;

(2) what was the number of people taken out of tax for each year since 1979 and the cost to the Exchequer in revenue forgone.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 January 1986, c. *593-94*]: The information is in the tables. For each financial year shown, the tables compare the yield from the tax regime in that year with the 1978-79 tax regime. All estimates are calculated on the 1985-86 tax base and all tax regimes have been indexed to 1985-86 levels by reference to the statutory formula. The comparisons therefore allow for budgetary changes in income tax rates and allowances, but not for any changes since 1978-79 in the definition of the income tax base.

The first table shows the total reduction (+) or increase (−) in tax yield from each income range; and the second table shows the average change for individual tax units. The third table shows the change in numbers of individuals liable to tax.

As child tax allowances were being phased out in 1978-79 they have been excluded from the comparison.

It is not possible to provide useful estimates of the liabilities in 1985-86 for the 1978-79 regime without indexation since Inland Revenue records do not cover many of the people who would be brought into tax by such low levels of personal allowances. A partial analysis with incomplete coverage would be misleading.

*Range of total income in 1985-86** £	*Number of units paying tax in 1985-86 (million)*	*Reductions (+)/Increases (−) in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime*						
		1979-80 £ million	*1980-81 £ million*	*1981-82 £ million*	*1982-83 £ million*	*1983-84 £ million*	*1984-85 £ million*	*1985-86 £ million*
Under 5,000	4·2	310	130	−340	−280	−20	140	270
5,000 to 10,000	8·1	1,310	820	−170	−60	500	900	1,210
10,000 to 15,000	4·6	1,260	900	210	290	680	1,050	1,290
15,000 to 20,000	1·8	760	580	250	290	480	680	790
20,000 to 30,000	1·0	830	690	280	330	560	760	830
30,000 to 50,000	0·3	740	650	390	420	570	750	770
Over 50,000	0·09	940	900	780	790	860	1,030	1,040
TOTAL	20·1	6,150	4,670	1,400	1,780	3,630	5,310	6,200
Over 30,000	0·4	1,680	1,550	1,170	1,210	1,430	1,780	1,810

*Range of total income in 1985-86** £	*Average per tax unit*						
	1979-80 £	*1980-81 £*	*1981-82 £*	*1982-83 £*	*1983-84 £*	*1984-85 £*	*1985-86 £*
Under 5,000†	60	30	−70	−60	0	30	50
5,000 to 10,000†	160	100	−20	−10	60	110	150
10,000 to 15,000	270	190	50	60	150	230	280
15,000 to 20,000	420	320	140	160	260	370	430
20,000 to 30,000	810	680	270	320	550	750	810
30,000 to 50,000	2,180	1,910	1,150	1,240	1,680	2,210	2,260
Over 50,000	10,440	10,000	8,670	8,780	9,560	11,440	11,560
TOTAL	290	220	70	80	170	250	290
Over 30,000	3,910	3,600	2,720	2,810	3,330	4,140	4,210

Reductions(+)/Increase(−) in numbers of taxpayers‡ liable to tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

1979-80 (thousands)	*1980-81 (thousands)*	*1981-82 (thousands)*	*1982-83 (thousands)*	*1983-84 (thousands)*	*1984-85 (thousands)*	*1985-86 (thousands)*
920	1,000	−340	−200	540	1,000	1,400

* All information is in terms of tax units—that is, married couples are counted as one and their incomes combined.

† By reference to the estimated numbers who would be liable to pay tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime; this number is some 900,000 greater than the numbers paying tax in 1985-86, 800,000 in the range of income below £5,000 and 100,000 in the range £5,000 to £10,000.

‡ Counting earning wives separately from their husbands.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which independent schools taking part in the assisted places scheme charge fees below the Inner London education authority cost of the secondary education per pupil; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Assisted places schools with September 1983 fee levels less than inner London's secondary unit cost for the financial year 1983-84 (the latest year for which figures are available) were as follows:

Abbey School, Reading
Abingdon School
Alice Ottley School, Worcester
Arnold School, Blackpool
Ashford School, Kent
Bancrofts School
Bath High School
Batley Grammar School
Bedford High School
Bedford Modern School
Belvedere School, Liverpool
Berkhampsted School for Girls
Birkenhead High School
Birkenhead School
Blackheath High School
Bolton School (Boys)
Bolton School (Girls)
Bradford Girls Grammar
Bradford Grammar School
Brentwood School
Brighton and Hove High School
Bristol Grammar School
Bromley High School
Bruton School for Girls
Bury Grammar School (Boys)
Bury Grammar School (Girls)
Central Newcastle High School
Cheadle Hulme School
City of London School for Girls
Clifton High School
Colet Court Prep School
Colfes School
Colston's Girls School
Coventry School
Croydon High School
Dame Allans Boys School
Dame Allans Girls School
Dame Alice Harpur School
Edgehill College
Eltham College
Exeter School
Farnborough High School
Haberdashers Askes School for Girls
Hampton School
Hasmonean High School (Girls)
Hereford Cathedral School
Hulme Grammar, Boys
Hulme Grammar School (Girls)
Hymers College
Ipswich High School
James Allen's Girls School
John Lyon School
King Edward's School, Bath
King Edward's School, Birmingham
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham
King Edward VII School, Lytham
King Edward VI School, Norwich
King Edward VI School, Southampton
King's High School for Girls, Warwick
King's School, Chester
King's School, Macclesfield
King's School, Worcester
Kirkham Grammar School
Lady Eleanor Holles School
La Sagesse Convent School
Leeds Girls High School
Leeds Grammar School
Liverpool College
Loreto Convent Grammar School
Loughborough Grammar
Loughborough High School
Magdalen College School
Manchester Grammar School
Manchester High School
Maynard School
Merchant Taylors, Liverpool
Merchant Taylors (Girls), Liverpool
Newcastle Under Lyme School
Northampton High School
North London Collegiate School
Norwich High School
Nottingham Girls High School
Nottingham High School
Notting Hill and Ealing High School
Old Palace School
Oxford High School
Perse School for Boys
Perse School for Girls
Plymouth College
Pocklington School
Portsmouth Grammar School
Portsmouth High School
Putney High School
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Blackburn
Queen Elizabeth Grammar, Wakefield
Queen Elizabeth Hospital School
Queen Mary School
Queens College School
Queens School, Chester
Redland High School
Red Maids School
Reigate Grammar School
Royal Grammar School, Newcastle
Royal Grammar School, Worcester
St. Albans School
St. Albans High School for Girls
St. Ambrose College
St. Anslem's College
St. Bede's College
St. Benedict's School
St. Dunstan's College
St. Edward's College
St. Faith's School
St. Helen's School
St. John's Beaumont School
St. John's College
St. Joseph's College
St. Joseph's Convent
St. Mary's College
St. Mary's Convent
St. Maurs Convent
Salesian College, Farnborough
School of St. Helen and St. Katharine
Sheffield High School
Shrewsbury High School
Sir William Perkins School
South Hampstead High School
Stamford School
Stamford High School
Stockport Grammar School
Streatham Hill and Clapham High School
Sutton High School
Sydenham High School
Talbot Heath School
Truro School
Truro High School
Upton Hall Convent School
Ursuline High School
Wakefield High School
Warwick School
Wellington School, Somerset
William Hulme Grammar School

Wimbledon High School
Withington Girls School
Wolverhampton Grammar School

Nursery Education

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, 20 January, column 77, if he will publish the information about nursery education in a table in the *Official Report*.

Mr. Dunn: The information is as follows:

Percentage of three and four year olds attending nursery schools and classes in maintained nursery and primary schools in England 1980-85

Percentages

Local Education Authority	*1980*		*1981*		*1982*		*1983*		*1984*		*1985*	
	Full-time pupils	*Part-time pupils*	*Full-time pupils*	*Part-time pupils*	*Full-time pupils*	*Part-time pupils*	*Full-time pupils*	*Part-time pupils*	*Full-time pupils*	*Part-time pupils*	*Full-time pupils*	*Part-time pupils*
Barking	8	14	11	15	9	23	5	26	4	32	4	30
Barnet	4	22	3	25	4	26	3	29	3	29	2	29
Bexley	1	8	1	11	1	11	1	11	1	10	1	11
Brent	6	24	7	28	7	30	6	30	5	30	5	27
Bromley	0	1	0	1	0	2	—	2	0	2	—	2
Croydon	2	5	2	5	2	5	1	6	2	6	2	6
Ealing	2	23	1	30	0	38	0	36	0	36	0	33
Enfield	0	20	0	21	—	22	—	22	—	21	—	22
Haringey	8	27	10	30	9	34	10	37	10	35	9	35
Harrow	1	16	1	17	0	19	0	17	—	16	—	16
Havering	—	4	—	4	—	4	—	4	0	4	—	4
Hillingdon	10	40	0	41	0	43	0	41	0	43	0	43
Hounslow	1	30	1	32	18	45	17	48	11	48	19	47
Kingston-upon-Thames	3	28	3	29	3	30	3	28	3	27	3	28
Merton	1	37	1	39	1	40	1	42	1	40	1	40
Newham	3	44	4	49	4	56	4	57	4	56	3	56
Redbridge	1	9	1	9	1	8	1	8	1	8	1	8
Richmond-upon-Thames	1	11	1	17	1	17	1	18	0	16	1	14
Sutton	2	12	2	13	1	15	1	16	1	14	0	16
Waltham Forest	3	32	3	36	3	38	3	37	3	37	3	38
ILEA	14	24	15	23	16	23	16	24	16	24	14	23
Birmingham	15	10	16	12	16	14	13	15	13	16	12	18
Coventry	7	13	6	16	5	17	5	18	4	19	4	19
Dudley	6	16	6	17	5	20	3	23	3	23	2	25
Sandwell	7	27	7	29	6	31	6	34	5	34	5	35
Solihull	0	20	0	24	0	25	0	26	0	25	0	27
Walsall	3	44	4	51	6	53	5	54	3	52	3	52
Wolverhampton	0	46	—	50	—	51	—	53	0	56	—	56
Knowsley	0	15	0	21	0	26	—	27	—	28	1	31
Liverpool	9	31	11	34	10	37	9	38	7	37	7	38
St. Helens	0	18	0	18	0	19	0	20	0	19	0	23
Sefton	3	24	4	22	3	25	2	26	2	26	2	27
Wirral	1	15	1	17	1	19	1	17	1	16	1	16
Bolton	14	16	13	19	13	20	10	22	9	24	7	26
Bury	5	7	6	9	6	10	5	12	5	14	5	13
Manchester	37	15	38	15	37	16	36	18	32	19	32	21
Oldham	12	12	13	11	12	14	12	14	11	17	13	16
Rochdale	4	24	6	24	5	24	4	24	4	24	3	24
Salford	30	6	32	7	36	9	37	12	37	12	38	13
Stockport	5	7	5	8	4	9	4	9	3	10	3	10
Tameside	4	26	4	33	4	35	3	36	3	37	3	35
Trafford	1	9	1	10	1	10	1	10	1	10	0	11
Wigan	0	16	0	18	1	21	1	22	1	22	1	24
Barnsley	2	44	2	51	1	50	1	49	1	48	1	48
Doncaster	2	36	2	38	2	40	2	37	2	36	2	37
Rotherham	10	27	11	28	11	28	7	33	7	32	6	33
Sheffield	6	24	7	28	6	32	6	32	5	32	5	34
Bradford	6	22	6	23	6	23	5	23	4	24	4	26
Calderdale	20	3	21	3	21	3	16	12	13	14	12	15
Kirklees	1	26	1	27	1	31	1	30	1	32	0	39
Leeds	2	18	3	21	3	23	3	24	2	26	2	28
Wakefield	6	34	5	34	5	35	5	37	4	38	4	41
Gateshead	4	19	5	25	4	29	2	31	2	30	1	31
Newcastle upon Tyne	21	15	23	16	23	17	21	20	21	19	20	20
North Tyneside	5	39	5	42	5	43	4	43	3	44	3	47
South Tyneside	7	35	7	42	4	48	2	52	2	49	1	47
Sunderland	4	26	5	26	4	29	3	31	3	32	3	33
Avon	7	5	7	5	7	6	7	6	7	6	7	7
Bedfordshire	8	21	8	23	7	24	5	24	5	24	5	24
Berkshire	3	19	3	19	2	19	2	20	2	20	2	22

Local Education Authority	1980 Full-time pupils	1980 Part-time pupils	1981 Full-time pupils	1981 Part-time pupils	1982 Full-time pupils	1982 Part-time pupils	1983 Full-time pupils	1983 Part-time pupils	1984 Full-time pupils	1984 Part-time pupils	1985 Full-time pupils	1985 Part-time pupils
Buckinghamshire	0	13	0	13	0	12	0	12	—	12	—	11
Cambridgeshire	2	9	2	10	2	10	2	10	2	9	2	10
Cheshire	1	16	2	18	1	19	1	19	1	19	1	21
Cleveland	1	42	1	43	1	44	1	46	0	47	0	48
Cornwall (including Isles of Scilly)	1	11	1	12	1	12	1	13	0	13	0	14
Cumbria	3	14	3	15	3	16	2	16	2	18	2	18
Derbyshire	5	14	5	15	5	15	4	15	4	15	4	18
Devon	1	6	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	7	1	8
Dorset	—	5	—	5	0	5	—	5	—	5	—	6
Durham	5	26	4	28	4	30	3	31	3	32	3	34
East Sussex	0	7	1	7	0	7	0	7	0	7	0	8
Essex	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	5	1	5	0	5
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hampshire	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5
Hereford & Worcester	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	5	1	5
Hertfordshire	2	30	2	29	1	29	1	30	1	30	1	31
Humberside	6	17	6	19	5	21	5	22	5	23	5	25
Isle of Wight	1	4	1	4	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5
Kent	0	4	0	5	0	5	—	5	—	5	—	5
Lancashire	2	12	1	13	1	14	1	14	1	14	1	15
Leicestershire	6	16	6	16	7	17	6	16	6	16	6	16
Lincolnshire	2	6	2	6	2	6	1	6	1	6	1	7
Norfolk	0	4	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5	0	5
North Yorkshire	3	13	3	13	3	14	2	14	2	16	2	15
Northamptonshire	2	7	1	7	1	7	2	9	2	10	2	12
Northumberland	3	10	3	13	3	14	1	15	2	17	1	20
Nottinghamshire	3	36	3	36	3	38	3	37	2	39	2	40
Oxfordshire	3	10	3	10	3	10	2	10	1	11	1	11
Shropshire	0	10	0	11	0	11	0	10	0	11	0	11
Somerset	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	—	0	0
Staffordshire	10	12	11	13	10	13	10	13	9	13	9	12
Suffolk	1	9	1	10	1	10	0	10	0	10	0	11
Surrey	1	11	1	11	1	11	1	11	1	11	1	11
Warwickshire	2	13	2	13	2	14	2	14	2	14	1	15
West Sussex	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	3
Wiltshire	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1
England	4	15	4	16	4	18	4	18	4	18	4	19

Schools (Heating Systems)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of schools which have had to be closed because their heating systems have been inadequate to deal with the recent cold weather.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected centrally.

English Teaching

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy towards the teaching of English to children of ethnic minorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government believe that all ethnic minority children must be equipped with a good command of English if they are to participate fully in school and adult life. Responsibility for determining the nature and extent of provision for teaching English as a second language rests with the local education authorities. The Swann committee endorsed an integrated approach towards teaching ESL within the normal classroom, where it can be related to the rest of the curriculum. The Department is encouraging LEAs to adopt this approach wherever possible. Good practice will continue to be promoted and disseminated by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and supported by grants made by my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966.

Public Examinations (Multiple Choice Questions)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has on the incidence of multiple choice questions in public examinations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is not collected by the Department.

Reading University

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students were at Reading university in 1978 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	Full-time students	Part-time students
December 1978	5,849	357
December 1984	5,560	515

Student Grants

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to his reply of 22 January, *Official Report*, columns 194-6, about the value of student grants, if he will provide the same information from 1978-79 as a base year.

Mr. Walden: The information is as follows:

	'Elsewhere' rate of grant	*Real value in percentage terms (September 1978 = 100) deflated by increases in—*				*London Rate of Grant*	*Real value in percentage terms (September 1978 = 1) deflated by increases in—*				*Total cost of maintenance as percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)*
	£	*(a) Retail prices*	*(b) Average earnings*	*(c) Rents*	*(d) Book prices*	£	*(a) Retail prices*	*(b) Average earnings*	*(c) Rents*	*(d) Book prices*	
1978-79	1,100	100	100	100	100	1,315	100	100	100	100	0·19
1979-80	1,245	97	97	98	97	1,485	97	97	98	97	0·19
1980-81	1,430	96	92	86	94	1,695	96	91	85	94	0·20
1981-82	1,535	93	89	74	89	1,825	93	88	73	89	0·20
1982-83	1,595	90	85	70	80	1,900	89	84	70	80	0·20
1983-84	1,660	89	82	70	70	1,975	88	81	69	70	0·20
1984-85*	1,775	91	82	70	68	2,100	90	82	69	67	n.a.

* Including the additional travel allowance of £50.
n.a. = not available.

Physics and Mathematics Graduates

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion he estimates of the current year's graduates in physics and mathematics will enter the teaching profession; and how many will have honours.

Mr. Chris Patten: Graduates in 1986 in mathematics and physics will not be available to enter the teaching profession until autumn 1987, after successfully completing a course of initial teacher training. Approximately 10 per cent. of estimated 1986 graduates in physics and 15 per cent. of those in mathematics have so far applied for places on initial teacher training courses in England and Wales starting in the autumn of 1986, leading to a postgraduate certificate in education. Estimates are not available of the likely honours graduates among these applicants. About 80 per cent. of all graduates in both subjects normally obtain honours.

Erdington (Secondary School)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) on what date he received a copy of the statutory notice about the proposal by Birmingham local education authority to establish a combined secondary school from September 1986 in Erdington as a result of a merger between Erdington girls' and Orchard schools;

(2) what representations, and on what dates, he has received seeking an early decision on the proposal by Birmingham local education authority to establish a combined secondary school from September 1986 in Erdington as a result of a merger between Erdington girls' and Orchard schools;

(3) whether he will announce his decision on the proposal by Birmingham local education authority to establish a combined secondary school from September 1986 in Erdington as a result of a merger between Erdington girls' and Orchard schools.

Mr. Dunn: Birmingham local education authority published on 16 March 1985 proposals under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 to cease to maintain Erdington girls' school and Orchard school at the end of the summer term 1986 and to establish a new mixed school in both sets of premises from September 1986.

A copy of the proposals was sent to my right hon. Friend on 19 March and received on 25 March.

The chief education officer of Birmingham wrote on 15 January 1986 to an official of the Department expressing concern that no decision had been announced. Since that date the authority has made further representations seeking a decision by means of telephone calls to officials.

A letter has been sent to the Birmingham local education authority today announcing my right hon. Friend's decision to approve the proposal.

GCSE Examination

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science which local authorities have asked for the introduction of the GCSE examination to be delayed.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave on 17 February, at column 14 to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

Higher Education

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has received concerning the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s"; and what has been the nature of these representations.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend has received 446 representations that referred specifically to the Green Paper "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s" and several hundred more concerning aspects of higher education policy that were covered in the Green Paper. The nature of the representations and the concerns expressed have varied widely. The issues most frequently raised have been: the funding of higher education, including research; future student numbers; the subject balance within higher education; and links between higher education and industry.

Schools (Leeds)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools in Leeds metropolitan district council were built before 1914.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not held centrally.

"Drug Misuse and the Young"

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what responses there have been to his Department's booklet, "Drug Misuse and the Young", which was published in 1985.

Mr. Dunn: A great deal of interest has been shown in this booklet: to date over 150,000 copies have been issued; another 50,000 will be issued. Most of these have been distributed to schools and colleges and other copies have been requested by health education departments, the youth service, the police, the churches, television authorities, and individuals from the United Kingdom and overseas. The booklet has been generally well received and is being used in various training courses and seminars on drugs misuse and as a reference by local authority officers, teachers and others.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Procurator Fiscal's Office, Glasgow

Mr. Martin asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland why there was a delay in making public the burglary at the procurator fiscal's office in Glasgow on 2 January.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Premature disclosure might have hampered investigations which were begun immediately and which continue. There was also concern that publication of details of the break in or lines of inquiry being pursued might be prejudicial to the rights of accused persons to a fair trial.

Mr. Martin asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland following the theft from the procurator fiscal's office in Glasgow, what steps are being taken to improve security.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: A full review of security arrangements in the premises occupied by all procurators fiscal is underway, and a number of changes have already been implemented.

Drugs

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland whether any arrangements exist in Scotland in cases where controlled drugs are to be presented as evidence in a trial whereby the bulk of the quantity of the drug confiscated may be destroyed and a sample amount held for production, together with a certificate indicating the precise quantity originally confiscated.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Under existing law and practice, the Crown must lodge all productions required for trial unless it is not reasonably practicable to do so. In serious drugs cases the Crown therefore lodges recovered drugs in their entirety.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement on the operation in Scotland of the present system for holding controlled drugs required for production as evidence in trials.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Controlled drugs required for production in court may be held by the police, officers of Customs and Excise, the procurator fiscal or the clerk of court, depending upon the stage reached in pre-trial procedure and security considerations.

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what arrangements exist in Scotland for the destruction of controlled drugs confiscated from people who have committed or are alleged to have committed drugs offences.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Drugs forfeited as a result of Court, proceedings are destroyed by the police on behalf of the Court authorities to whom a certificate of destruction is subsequently provided.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Residential Care Homes

12. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of residents in private or voluntary care homes for the elderly are physically disabled.

Mr. Major: I regret that the information is not currently available. However, the Department is engaged in discussions with the local authorities with a view to introducing an improved data collection system. This will provide information on the number of persons in residential care by disability as well as by age.

43. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will consider amending the Registered Homes Act 1984 to permit his Department to prescribe, as pre-conditions to legislation, minimum numbers of beds for *(a)* private nursing homes and *(b)* residential care homes.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 16 December 1985, at column *80*. For private nursing homes, there is no minimum number of beds prescribed so that if only one bed is provided for use at night the home is subject to registration. There are no plans to amend the Registered Homes Act 1984.

70. **Mr. Andrew Bowden** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the Ernst and Whinney report on residential care homes.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, south (Mr. Ashley) on 24 February.

Health Education

15. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans to take any additional steps to improve the effectiveness of health education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The main responsibility for health education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland rests with the Health Education Council, which is largely funded by the Government. The council has instituted a complete review of its operations with the aim of improving their effectiveness, and is also introducing improved methods of evaluating the material that it provides.

Regional Health Authorities

17. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received any representations on the present system of appointing members of regional health authorities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am not aware of any representations about the appointments system as such.

Social Workers

18. **Mr. Fisher** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the trend in the level of violence against social workers by their clients in the last two years.

Mr. Whitney: Certain risks of this kind are inherent in the nature of a social worker's duties, particularly those which bring him or her into contact with emotionally disturbed or mentally disordered clients. It would not be practicable to collect comprehensive information centrally but such indications as we have about the incidence of violence do not reveal a trend. Employing authorities have a responsibility to monitor the level of risk to their staff.

Civil Defence

19. **Mr. Hind** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given to regional health authorities on the minimum protection factor recommended for emergency medical centres and community first aid posts.

Mr. Whitney: Guidance has not been given to health authorities on minimum protection factors for nuclear attack. The advice on emergency planning which the Department issues to health authorities comes within that which the Home Office issues to local authorities. The question of the protection factor for any building is one which forms part of continuing studies on the general subject of protection against nuclear attack.

50. **Mr. John Browne** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether supplies of respirators and protective clothing will be made available for ambulance personnel working in contaminated areas following an attack with chemical weapons.

61. **Sir Kenneth Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what form of chemical monitoring equipment will be available to ambulance personnel operating in contaminated areas following an attack with chemical weapons.

68. **Mr. Alexander** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by what means hospitals, medical centres and community first aid posts will be warned that they are under chemical attack or are in a contaminated zone.

72. **Mr. Roger King** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether training of medical staff for emergency medical centres will include treatment of casualties caused by chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

73. **Mr. Robert Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what level of casualties resulting from chemical attack on United Kingdom military targets his civil defence plans are based.

95. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what stocks of decontamination materials will be held at hospitals, emergency medical centres and community first-aid posts in the event of chemical attack on the United Kingdom.

93. **Mr. Spence** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes to give guidance to his civil defence planning staff on the provision of decontamination materials and training in decontamination to meet the effects of chemical attack on the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: In the absence of a ban on chemical weapons the Government are considering the questions of detection and warning of chemical attacks and protective measures against them. Broad guidance on the threat from chemical warfare is contained in emergency planning guidance to local authorities issued by the Home Office. Health authorities are being advised that the threat from chemical weapons will be the subject of guidance when current studies by the Government are complete.

51. **Mr. Stevens** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations were consulted before he issued the draft document "Civil Defence Planning in the National Health Service".

Mr. Whitney: The draft document "Civil Defence Planning in the National Health Service" was itself a consultation document and was issued for such purpose in 1985 to regional health authorities, district health authorities, special health authorities, special hospitals, family practitioner committees, Public Health Laboratory Service, Regional Blood Transfusion Service, British Medical Association, Royal College of Nursing and the Royal College of Midwives.

Before the document was issued the Department had meetings with health emergency planning officers and with other representatives of the Health Service as well as with representatives of professional bodies and the voluntary aid societies, in order to get their views on the need for and content of a revised circular. We are now considering the substantial amount of comment received following the issue of the document.

76. **Mr. Ashby** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has held with the voluntary aid societies on the manning of emergency medical centres and the training of the necessary staff.

84. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he gives to regional health authorities on the location and manning of emergency medical centres.

Mr. Whitney: Officials of the Department have held joint discussions with Home Office officials and representatives of the voluntary aid societies on a range of matters which have included the manning of emergency medical centres and the training of the necessary staff. Discussions have been held at the request of the VAS since the issue in June 1985 of the draft consultation document on civil defence planning in the National Health Service.

Guidance on the location and manning of EMCs is contained in the document which was issued to regional health authorities, amongst others, for consultation. It included the following: EMCs should be seperate from major hospitals and as far as possible, depending upon local geography and other features, co-located or close to premises which have been designated by local authorities as community facilities. They should be staffed wherever

possible by general practitioners and qualified nurses drawn from various sources together with members of the VAS and public volunteers. The small cadre of trained staff would be most effective if used to advise and direct voluntary help in tending the sick and injured. EMCs will vary in size, levels of staff and equipment, and potential for care depending on geographical factors and local requirements. Suitable buildings should now be identified having regard externally to ambulance access and internally to stretcher handling, and the need to observe large numbers of casualties. The planning for this vital element in emergency care will require close liaison and co-operation between health and county environmental protection officers, local authorities, family practitioner committees and VAS.

91. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps have been taken to ensure that adequate supplies of dosimeters and survey meters will be made available for hospitals, emergency medical centres and community first aid posts in the event of nuclear attack.

Mr. Whitney: A new type of survey meter will be issued which does not require stringently controlled storage conditions. Hitherto, there has been a standing arrangement with public authorities that ear-marked stocks of a range of survey instruments will be held in some Home Office depots. Adequate stocks of both survey meters and dosimeters will continue to be held centrally and would be issued as part of the measures for transition to war.

94. **Mr. Pawsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he has given on the levels of first aid and pharmaceutical materials to be held at all emergency medical centres.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) earlier today.

Social Security Bill

20. **Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has had from disability organisations in relation to the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: Since June 1985 Ministers have had meetings with several organisations representing disabled people including Mencap, MIND, the Spastics Society, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, the National Deaf Children Society and Age Concern. In addition, a large number of written submissions have been received from a wide range of national and local organisations, many of whom made representations about the needs of disabled people.

Royal College of Nursing

21. **Mr. Beith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met representatives of the Royal College of Nursing; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last met representatives of the Royal College of Nursing at a private dinner on 15 January 1986. Since then I have had discussions with representatives of the Royal College on NHS expenditure and on nurse education and training.

Ambulance Service

22. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes to make available pralidoxime mesylate (oxime) tablets, atropine antoject units and atropine eye drops for use by ambulance personnel operating in contaminated areas following an attack with chemical weapons.

Mr. Whitney: The Government are considering how best to protect people from the hazards brought about by the use of chemical weapons, and are examining ways of detecting and monitoring the presence of chemical agents. This is a major task and it would be inappropriate to issue guidance on the availability of drugs for use by ambulance personnel until the work is complete.

69. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has received representations regarding the cutbacks in ambulance provision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has received a number of representations about various aspects of the ambulance service. Some of these have been concerned with the effects of local reorganisation or the application of the correct criteria for transport by the ambulance service, that it should be provided only when the patient has medical need for it.

This Government have increased, not cut back, ambulance provision. Expenditure on ambulance services in England increased by 94·4 per cent. in cash terms between 1978-79 and 1984-85. This represents an increase in real terms of 9·2 per cent.

92. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will review the ambulance service.

Mr. Whitney: We see no reason to do so at present.

Abortions (Cost)

23. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the latest average cost of an abortion in National Health Service hospitals.

Mr. Hayhoe: The estimated revenue cost is about £170.

NHS (Regional Inequalities)

24. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on regional inequalities in National Health Service provision.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government remain committed to the principle of redistributing resources across the country as recommended by the resource allocation working party in order to secure equal access to health care for working people in equal need. Very considerable progress has been made, and in 1986-87 all regions except North East and North West Thames will be within 4 per cent. of their target shares of resources.

As regions come close to their targets it is increasingly important that those targets should reflect relative need as fairly as possible. It is for this reason that my right hon.

Friend has asked the NHS management board to take the lead in reviewing the operation of the RAWP formula and looking at the scope for improvement.

Social Security Review

25. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the implications of the social security review for the future level of demand for social services for single parents.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the implications of the social security review for the work of social workers.

Mr. Newton: We do not expect the reform of social security to have a significant direct effect on the level of demand for social services, although our proposals for the social fund recognise the importance of good liaison between social services departments and social security offices. A major objective of our proposals for the income-related benefits is to direct more help to families with children, including lone parents.

NHS Expenditure

26. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications for social services provision over the next three years of the levels of expenditure referred to in the Government expenditure plans, Cmnd. 9702.

Mr. Whitney: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to local authority social services. The figures given in Cmnd. 9702 for spending on individual local authority services in 1986-87 are indicative. It is for local authorities themselves to decide their spending on the individual services they provide, in the light of all their local circumstances and of the Government's call for restraint in total local authority spending.

The 1986-87 indicative figure for personal social services spending in England (£2,521 million) represents a 4·3 per cent. cash increase over the local authorities' budgets in 1985-86. The implications of spending at this level for services will depend on movements in the costs facing local authorities over the coming months, in particular pay settlements for local authority employees, and on the extent to which authorities can achieve improvements in efficiency.

No decisions on provision for local authority current spending for years after 1986-87 have been taken. These will be reviewed in the public expenditure survey during 1986.

28. **Mr. Hicks** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the growth in real financial terms since May 1979 of expenditure on the National Health Service in England and Wales; what was the corresponding figure for the South-West regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Between 1978-79 and 1984-85 expenditure on the National Health Service in England and Wales grew by 21 per cent. in real terms. Within that overall total health authority expenditure grew by 17 per cent. in real terms and spending by South Western regional health authority by 19 per cent. in real terms. These figures clearly demonstrate the Government's commitment to the Health Service.

Basildon Hospital

27. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the possible removal of maternity and other associated services from Basildon hospital.

Mr. Whitney: As at 14 February we had received 34 representations about various aspects of the proposals for reorganising services in Basildon and Thurrock health authority. These representations followed the issue of a consultation document by the authority. It is not possible to separate those representations which dealt only with those proposals affecting Basildon hospital's maternity or other services.

Basildon and Thurrock District Health Authority

29. **Dr. McDonald** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he takes to monitor the level of hospital provision in the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Initial responsibility for monitoring Basildon and Thurrock district health authority and the services it provides rests with the North East Thames regional health authority. Regional health authorities are held accountable by the Secretary of State for Social Services, in particular through the regional review and regional performance review processes, for the health care provision within their regions.

Disabled People (Charities)

31. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he last met representatives of the charities which represent the disabled; and what was discussed.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend, my ministerial colleagues and I often meet representatives of voluntary organisations concerned with disabled people, and discuss a variety of issues of general or particular concern.

Speech Therapists

32. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there are any proposals to increase the salaries of speech therapists in line with other graduate professions in the National Health Service.

54. **Mr. Fatchett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the current salaries and conditions of speech therapists.

83. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the salaries and conditions of speech therapists.

85. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the salaries and conditions of speech therapists.

86. **Ms. Richardson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether there are any proposals to increase the salaries of speech therapists in line with other graduate professions in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Members to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) on 17 February, at column *63*.

Severe Weather Payments

33. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the steps taken to activate the exceptionally severe weather payments for those on supplementary benefit.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today to the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick).

Resettlement Units

34. **Mr. Austin Mitchell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what progress is being made in the consultation on the replacement of resettlement units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: In each of the Department's seven social security regions review teams have been set up to consider future resettlement provision for the single homeless and rootless. The teams, with members from both statutory and voluntary organisations as well as the Department, are looking at the existing network of services and the level of demand and will make recommendations on the type and range of facilities that should replace the 15 resettlement units outside London. Five regions have produced interim reports dealing with the proposals they have received to date: local authority housing departments have been involved in most of the larger urban areas and several have expressed an interest in providing direct access hostels. In general voluntary agencies are concentrating on second stage hostels.

Officials have asked review teams to report substantively by the spring, when it is hoped to mount a national conference at which nominees from the review teams and representatives of local authority associations and national agencies dealing with the single homeless will discuss the reports and the national framework for resettlement which they suggest. Ministers will consider the recommendations arising from the exercise later this year.

Limited List Prescribing

35. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the latest figures for the estimated savings on the selected list of drugs.

Mr. Hayhoe: The estimated annual savings remain at £75 million.

Supplementary Benefit (Students)

36. **Mr. Andrew F. Bennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to lay the regulations on supplementary benefit in respect of students.

Mr. Newton: After we have had an appropriate opportunity to consider the views of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations on the proposals which have been put to them for consultation, which we expect to receive by mid-March.

Ancillary Workers (Pay)

37. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the pay claim of ancillary workers in the National Health Service.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) on 17 February, at column *64*.

State Pension

38. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to uprate the state basic pension to bring it more into line with the increase in earnings.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House yesterday at columns 680-81, on the subject of the uprating of social security benefits.

Mentally Handicapped People

39. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of joint health and social services finance schemes for the care of the mentally handicapped.

Mr. Whitney: Under the joint finance arrangements, which were introduced in 1976, district health authorities make payments to local social services authorities or voluntary organisations towards selected social services schemes. Payments may be made to meet the full cost for a maximum of three years, and for a maximum of seven years in all after which the local authority or voluntary organisation is expected to take over the funding of the scheme. Funds are allocated to health authorities for this specific purpose and for 1985-86 the total allocation amounted to £105 million. Roughly one third of joint finance is spent on services for mentally handicapped people.

Under the care in the community arrangements, district health authorities may make payments for as long as necessary towards community services for long-stay patients moving out of hospital. Joint finance may be used as bridging finance until full savings accrue from the movement of people out of hospital. For this purpose the maximum period of joint finance may in special circumstances be extended to 10 years at 100 per cent. and to 13 years in all. District health authorities may then continue the payments from their main allocations. It is for health and local authorities and other agencies to make use of this financial flexibility in jointly planning the development of community care. About £17 million of the joint finance funds have been centrally reserved over the four-year period up to March 1988 to fund a programme of 28 pilot projects under the care in the community arrangements. Eleven of these projects relate to mentally handicapped people.

Some health and local authorities have entered into joint funding arrangements for the provision of, for example, day centres where operational costs are shared.

Child Benefit

40. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether it is his policy to increase child benefit in line with inflation at the next uprating.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's statement to the House yesterday, at columns 680-81.

Hypothermia

41. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance has been given by his Department to local offices and local authority social services departments concerning the danger of hypothermia among the aged and the very young.

Mr. Newton: Revised guidance was issued in October 1985 to local office staff to assist them in identifying potential hypothermia sufferers. That guidance is contained in paras 53 and 54 of appendix 23 to the "S Manual", a copy of which is in the library.

Mortgage Interest

42. **Mrs. Beckett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the results of his latest discussions with the building societies about new arrangements for the payment of mortgage interest in the first six months of receiving benefit.

Mr. Newton: Discussions are continuing.

McColl Report

44. **Mr. Ashdown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish the National Health Service management board report on the McColl report.

Mr. Newton: The management board has been asked for advice to enable ministerial decisions to be taken on action to follow up the McColl report, not to produce another report for publication.

Social Security Reform

45. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to provide a more accurate estimate of the effect on income support claimants of the new rules on capital assessment proposed in the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security," Cmnd. 9691; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Such estimates are at present very imprecise as they can be obtained only from data about claimants' investment income contained in the family expenditure survey. The technical difficulties of collecting information about capital holdings are considerable, but we have asked the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to undertake a pilot study to test the feasibility of obtaining more accurate data.

97. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with student organisations concerning the social security review.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are currently in receipt of attendance allowances *(a)* on the higher rate and *(b)* on the lower rate; and how these figures compare with corresponding figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding the effect on severely disabled persons of the provisions of the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: Since June 1985 I have met a number of organisations representing disabled people to discuss the social security reforms. I held a meeting in September 1985 at which the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation were represented, and a joint meeting attended by representatives from MENCAP, MIND and Spastics Society in October 1985. In addition I have addressed meetings held by organisations representing disabled people including the Royal National Institute for the Deaf in October 1985, the National Deaf Children's Society in October 1985 and the Spastics Society in November 1985.

A wide range of organisations representing disabled people responded to the invitation to send in comments on the Green Paper. These included the Voluntary Council for Handicapped Children, Disabled Information and Advice, Scottish Council on Disability, the Haemophilia Society, British Limbless Ex-Servicemen's Association, Greater London Association for Disabled People, Disability Alliance, Disablement Income Group, Disablement Income Group (Scotland), MENCAP, MIND, Multiple Sclerosis Society, Scottish Association for Autistic Children, National League of the Blind and Disabled, Royal National Institute for the Blind, National Schizophrenia Fellowship, Parkinson's Disease Society, RADAR, Scottish Association for Mental Health, Wales Council for the Disabled, The Association of Carers, National Association of Industries for the Blind and Disabled, and the Northern Ireland Council for the Handicapped.

Records of correspondence received since the publication of the White Paper are not held in a form which would enable me readily to identify those organisations representing disabled people.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assumptions were made in tables P1 to P6 in the technical annex to "Reform of Social Security" as to the career pattern of earnings of each of the 12 earners listed in paragraph 1.3; and whether he will publish figures illustrating the effects of varying these assumptions.

Mr. Newton: The following tables set out the assumptions made for each of the earners listed in tables P1-P4 of the technical annex. The earnings values used are at November 1985 levels and are assumed to increase in real terms by 1·5 per cent. a year. For tables P5 and P6, it has been assumed that women in table P3 were married to men in table P1 and women in P4 to men in P2, respectively.

I regret that it is not possible to provide information on the effects of varying these assumptions as producing this would involved disproportionate use of computer and manpower resources.

TABLE P1
Male—more years with earnings

£ per week

Age	*Low earnings*	*Middle earnings*	*High earnings*
16	80	0	0
17	80	0	0
18	80	0	0
19	80	150	200
20	80	150	200
21	80	150	200
22	80	150	200
23	0	150	200
24	80	150	200

Age	Low earnings	Middle earnings	High earnings
25	80	150	200
26	120	150	200
27	120	150	200
28	120	150	200
29	0	150	200
30	120	150	200
31	120	150	200
32	120	150	200
33	120	150	200
34	120	150	200
35	0	200	200
36	120	200	200
37	120	200	200
38	120	200	200
39	120	200	200
40	120	200	200
41	120	200	200
42	120	200	200
43	120	200	200
44	120	200	200
45	120	200	265
46	120	200	265
47	120	200	265
48	120	200	265
49	120	200	265
50	120	200	265
51	80	200	265
52	80	200	265
53	80	200	265
54	80	200	265
55	80	150	265
56	80	150	265
57	80	150	265
58	80	150	265
59	80	150	265
60	80	150	265
61	80	150	265
62	80	150	265
63	80	150	265
64	80	150	265

Table P2
Male—Fewer years with earnings

£ per week

Age	Low earnings	Middle earnings	High earnings
16	0	0	0
17	0	0	0
18	80	0	0
19	80	150	0
20	80	150	200
21	80	150	200
22	80	150	200
23	0	150	200
24	80	150	200
25	80	150	200
26	120	150	200
27	120	150	200
28	120	150	200
29	0	0	200
30	120	150	200
31	120	150	200
32	120	150	200
33	120	150	200
34	120	150	200
35	0	200	200
36	120	200	200
37	120	200	200
38	120	200	200
39	120	200	200
40	0	200	200
41	120	200	200
42	120	200	200
43	120	200	200

Table P3
Female—More years with earnings

£ per week

age	low earnings	middle earnings	high earnings
16	0	0	0
17	80	120	180
18	80	120	180
19	80	120	180
20	80	120	180
21	80	120	180
22	80	120	180
23	80	120	180
24	0	0	0
25	0	0	0
26	0	0	0
27	0	60	90
28	0	60	90
29	0	60	90
30	0	60	90
31	40	60	90
32	40	60	90
33	40	60	90
34	40	60	90
35	40	60	90
36	40	60	90
37	40	60	90
38	40	60	90
39	40	60	90
40	40	60	90
41	40	120	180
42	40	120	180
43	80	120	180
44	80	120	180
45	80	120	180
46	80	120	180
47	80	120	180
48	80	120	180
49	80	120	180
50	80	120	180
51	80	120	180
52	80	120	180
53	80	120	180
54	80	120	180
55	80	120	180
56	80	120	180
57	80	120	180
58	80	120	180
59	80	120	180

TABLE P4
Female—fewer years with earnings

£ per week

age	low earnings	middle earnings	high earnings
16	0	0	0
17	80	120	180
18	80	120	180
19	80	120	180
20	80	120	180
21	80	120	180
22	80	120	180
23	80	120	180
24	0	0	0
25	0	0	0
26	0	0	0
27	0	0	0
28	0	0	0
29	0	0	0
30	0	0	0
31	0	0	0
32	0	0	0
33	0	0	0
34	0	0	0
35	0	0	0
36	40	60	90
37	40	60	90
38	40	60	90
39	40	60	90
40	40	60	90
41	40	60	90
42	40	60	90
43	40	60	90
44	40	60	90
45	40	60	90
46	0	0	0
47	80	120	180
48	80	120	180
49	80	120	180
50	80	120	180
51	80	120	180
52	80	120	180
53	80	120	180
54	80	120	180
55	80	120	180
56	80	120	180
57	80	120	180
58	80	120	180
59	80	120	180

Community Charge

46. **Mr. Snape** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a new version of the technical annex to the White Paper, "Reform of Social Security", Cmnd. 9691, in the light of the proposals for a community charge in "Paying for Local Government", Cmnd. 9714.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) on 17 February, at column 69.

Nursing Staff (Recruitment)

47. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the current ability of the National Health Service nationally to recruit nursing staff at all grades on current terms and conditions of service.

Mr. Hayhoe: Recruitment to all grades of nursing and midwifery staff continues to be generally satisfactory. Provisional figures for September 1985 show that the number of such staff in England increased by 3,600 to 401,100 whole time equivalents compared with September 1984.

Some recruitment problems do exist in specific areas of work and particular locations. A survey for the Review Body for Nursing Staff, Midwives and Health Visitors showed that at 31 March 1984 the main areas of difficulty were nurse education, maternity midwifery, mental handicap and mental illness, where between 3 and 5 per cent. of all whole-time equivalent funded posts had remained vacant for at least three months compared with the average of 2·5 per cent. for all nursing and midwifery staff. Inadequate pay and career prospects were given as factors in less than 2 per cent. of the vacancies.

The information for March 1985 is still being validated, but provisional results indicate a similar picture of low levels of vacancies.

Breast Cancer

48. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the outcome of his Department's consideration of the experience of Sweden in relation to developing screening methods for the early identification of breast cancer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The United Kingdom working group on breast cancer screening has considered the evidence from the Swedish and other important overseas studies of breast cancer screening by mammography. This is reviewed in the group's interim report, copies of which have been placed in the Library. The group will submit its final report later this year. This will set out the policy options for the development of breast cancer screening, their costs and benefits, and overall implications for the National Health Service.

Elderly Persons

49. **Mr. Cohen** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he plans any new initiatives regarding care for the elderly in the community.

Mr. Whitney: Our main objective for the care of elderly people is to enable them to live independently in the community for as long as possible. All relevant health and social services policies are directed to that end. Two recent specific initiatives designed to assist the development of services are still being advanced—the "Care in the Community" pilot projects include seven schemes to enable elderly long-stay patients to move out of hospital and a number of projects under the "Helping the Community to Care" programme are designed to help families and volunteers to meet the needs of elderly people living at home. Progress is kept under review. For example, a joint seminar with the Department of the Environment is to be held on 5 March to discuss the various services which can help elderly people to stay in their own homes, and there is to be a DHSS seminar on the specific issue of dispersed alarm systems on 10 April.

Drug Misuse

52. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on his Department's measures to combat drug misuse.

Mr. Whitney: We aim to reduce demand by continuing our campaign of education and information, while taking further steps to encourage better services for those who suffer harm from misuse.

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the total number of deaths recorded as resulting in whole or part from drug abuse for each London borough for the last year in which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows the numbers of deaths from drug dependence and from nondependent abuse of drugs (excluding tobacco and alcohol) for usual residents of each London borough where at least one death was registered in 1984. There were no deaths from these causes to usual residents of the remaining London boroughs in that year.

Number of deaths from drug abuse, persons, all ages, London boroughs, 1984

Area of usual residence	*Cause of death*	
London boroughs	*Drug dependence ICD(9)* 304*	*Nondependent abuse of drugs (excluding tobacco and alcohol) ICD(9)* 305.2 to 305.9*
Barking and Dagenham	3	—
Bromley	3	—
Camden	5	—
Hackney	1	1
Hammersmith and Fulham	1	—
Hounslow	1	—
Islington	3	—
Kensington and Chelsea	3	1
Lambeth	5	—
Lewisham	2	—
Merton	2	—
Richmond upon Thames	2	—
Southwark	2	1
Sutton	1	—
Tower Hamlets	3	—
Waltham Forest	1	—
Wandsworth	6	2
Westminster, City of	10	1

* International Classification of Diseases, 9th revision.

Pharmaceutical Service

53. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake a review of the salaries and conditions of service of those employed in the National Health Service pharmaceutical service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Salaries and conditions of service of pharmaceutical staff in the National Health Service are matters for negotiation in the Pharmaceutical Whitley council. I understand that proposals for substantial increases in the pay of basic and staff grade pharmacists have been made by the management side of the council and are under consideration by the staff side; and that the council expects shortly to receive a report by a working party on the grading structure of hospital pharmacy staff.

Family Income Supplement, Leicester

55. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients of family income supplement there were in the years 1980 to 1985 from the office of his Department in (i) Lower Hill street, Leicester and (ii) Yeoman street, Leicester.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available. Family income supplement claims are dealt with by one centre at Blackpool and no information is maintained about claims from particular local areas.

NHS General Managers

56. **Mr. Stephen Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received on the effects of the appointment of National Health Service general managers on provision of adequate nursing care.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received some 200 letters as a result of the Royal College of Nursing's campaign about general management. Few have concentrated upon patient care.

Board and Lodging Regulations

57. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the operation of the Department of Health and Social Security board and lodging regulations.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend, the Member for Southend, East (Mr. Taylor) on 28 January, at column 782.

Community Care

58. **Mr. Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of people who have been discharged into the community under the community care policy in each year since 1980.

Mr. Whitney: Statistics of the total number of discharges (including transfers) from mental illness and mental handicap hospitals are available in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England", copies of which are in the Library. However, the statistics show that the great majority of discharges follow stays of less than six months, usually for short-term care and treatment or family respite. An indication of the number of people who have been resettled in the community after, in effect, living in hospital is given by the figures in the table of people discharged after stays of five years or more. Some of those concerned may require to be readmitted for a time for example because of changes in their condition.

Discharges after durations of stay of 5 years or more from NHS mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units in England

	Mental illness	*Mental handicap*
1980	1,452	1,064
1981	1,293	1,122
1982	1,253	1,144
1983	1,311	1,457
1984	1,624	1,787

Chiropodists

59. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the present shortage of National Health Service trained and state registered chiropodists and the number of training places which will be available in 1986-87; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Although at 31 March 1984, 14 per cent. of funded posts in chiropody were unfilled after three months, I understand that because of improved recruitment since then the number of such vacancies has fallen.

Firm information is not available on the exact number of training places which will be available in England in the academic year 1986-87 — the figure for 1985-86 was 318, which represents a 16 per cent. increase over previous years. This increase takes account of the opening of a new school of chiropody at Northampton. A further school at Southampton should be ready for opening in the 1987-88 academic year.

Pensioners' Charter

60. **Mr. Livsey** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the National Federation of Retirement Pensioners Associations on the pensioners' charter, a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Major: We have received a substantial number of representations from individual members of the National Federation of Retirement Pensioners, both directly and through hon. Members. My right hon. Friend expects shortly to meet a delegation from the national executive of the federation in order to discuss the pensioners' charter and other issues.

Homelessness (Greater London)

63. **Mr. Dykes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish a departmental inquiry into the problem of homeless families in the Greater London area.

Mr. Whitney: There are no plans to establish such an inquiry at present; however, the main responsibility for the accommodation needs of homeless families lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Child Minder Schemes

64. **Ms. Harman** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications of the social security review for local authority child minder schemes.

Mr. Newton: We would not expect the proposals in the current Social Security Bill to have a significant impact on local authority child minder schemes.

Social Fund

65. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from the Council on Tribunals, on the right to independent appeal for claimants against decisions made by officers of the proposed social fund.

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services and I met the chairman and secretary of the Council on Tribunals on 11 December 1985. On 21 January the chairman of the council sent my right hon. Friend a copy of its special report concerning appeals under the proposed social fund.

82. **Mr. Gordon Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what right of appeal he proposes for claimants debarred from assistance from the social fund.

Mr. Newton: A person who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a request for help from the social fund would have a right to a review of the decision along the lines set out in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security".

Kidney Transplant Programme

66. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the progress of the kidney transplant programme.

Mr. Whitney: No. Although the numbers of kidney transplants performed in 1984 and 1985 were significantly higher than in previous years, more such operations are urgently needed; the waiting list continues to rise as a higher proportion of kidney patients are diagnosed as suitable for transplantation. The factor that limits the expansion of the kidney transplant programme is the availability of donor organs. Ministers have taken a number of initiatives in the last two years to encourage more donation, the most recent an approach to the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors, who have agreed to bring the need to the attention of people in industry.

Hospitals (Military Targets)

67. **Mr. Michael Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of hospitals lie within a 20 km radius of possible military targets.

Mr. Whitney: It is impossible to predict with any certainty which targets would be included in any attack on this country; they would depend upon the political and strategic intentions of an enemy at the time.

Health and Social Services

71. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the potential for a rise in employment in health and social services over the next 12 months.

Mr. Hayhoe: Health authorities are responsible for estimating their manpower needs, and their proposals for staffing in 1986-87 are at present being considered in the context of their short-term programmes for that year. Employment in the family practitioner services is expected to increase slightly in line with past trends despite a small projected reduction in administrative and clerical posts. Local authorities are responsible for the staffing of social services departments.

Pharmacists (Contract)

75. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received about the proposed new contract for pharmacists; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since the new contract was agreed with the representatives of community pharmacists in May 1985 approximately 600 representations have been received, 85 per cent. of which were in favour of its early implementation. I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Mr. Watts) on 7 February, at columns *289-90*.

Child Abuse

77. **Mr. Meadowcroft** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to produce a document on research into the incidence and causes of child abuse in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Whitney: The Department has no plans to produce a document about research into the incidence and causes of child abuse but is currently funding research to evaluate various types of intervention in cases of child abuse.

Care Allowance

78. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now extend invalid care allowance to married women.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply earlier today to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Miss Maynard) and my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir. D. Price).

Hospitals (Linen Supplies)

79. **Mr. O'Brien** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance he gives to health authorities on arrangements for the regular delivery to hospitals of clean linen and clothes by contractors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Department issued guidance to health authorities in the notes attached to its specimen contract for laundry services, a copy of which is in the Library.

Renal Failure

80. **Mr. Carter-Jones** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the current treatment position for end stage renal failure.

Mr. Whitney: According to the latest figures available from the European Dialysis and Transplant Association, the number of new renal patients accepted for treatment in the United Kingdom during 1984 was 2,023, which compares with 1,233 in 1979, and the number of renal patients in the United Kingdom receiving treatment on 31 December 1984 was 11,235, which compares with 6,167 on 31 December 1979. All regional health authorities have agreed to increase facilities for the treatment of end stage renal failure and to accept new patients at an annual rate of at least 40 per million population by 1987.

Personal Social Services

81. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish a Green Paper on the personal social services.

Mr. Whitney: We are still considering the issues concerned.

Supplementary Benefit (Young Persons)

87. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many young people are presently in receipt of reduced supplementary benefit because they have declined a place on the YTS.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospitals (Food Poisoning)

88. **Mrs. Renée Short** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to ensure that in future statistics of deaths from food poisoning in National Health Service hospitals distinguish those who acquired the infection in hospital from those who acquired it elsewhere.

Mr. Hayhoe: There are two sources of information about people who die in National Health Service hospitals from food poisoning:

i. information on death certificates. This does not identify where the infection was acquired.

ii. Reports of deaths arising in food poisoning outbreaks in hospitals, which are notified to the communicable diseases surveillance centre.

The latter are not comprehensive and difficulties in identifying the source and type of infection make such information imprecise. However, I have no plans to collect more detailed statistics.

British Medical Association

89. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he next plans to meet the hospital junior staff committee of the British Medical Association.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have no such plans at present.

In Vitro Fertilisation

90. **Mr. Hargreaves** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, how many patients received in vitro fertilisation treatment in England and Wales *(a)* privately and *(b)* through the National Health Service for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

96. **Mr. Holt** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans he has to give additional financial assistance to those who are long-term unemployed and have never had a job.

Mr. Newton: Those entitled to supplementary benefit will receive additional benefit following the uprating in July. The proposals in the current Social Security Bill to replace the present supplementary benefit scheme by income support are designed to help those with children by providing for a family premium.

Special Hardship Provision

98. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many requests for special hardship provision from elderly and disabled residents in private or voluntary care homes who have been in receipt of supplementary benefit since April 1985 have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused.

Mr. Newton: Seventy nine applications have been received for an extension of the transitional protection provisions on the grounds that exceptional hardship would otherwise result. We are currently considering these applications.

AIDS

99. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people have died from acquired immune deficiency syndrome since the disease was first diagnosed in the United Kingdom, in which places in the United Kingdom; how many have been diagnosed as having contracted acquired immune deficiency syndrome; and where the diagnosis was made.

Mr. Hayhoe: Up to the end of January 1986, 287 cases of acquired immune deficiency syndrome had been reported to the communicable disease surveillance centre. These may be broken down into geographical areas as follows:

	Number
Thames Region	232
Wessex and South Western	20
Other regions:	
Midlands and the North	22
Wales	5
Scotland	6
Northern Ireland	2

It is not possible to provide a more detailed breakdown of the location of these cases without endangering patient confidentiality.

Of these cases, there have been 144 deaths. As patients may receive treatment in one part of the country but return closer to home when they are nearing death, a breakdown of deaths by location is not available.

Pensions (Income Support)

30. **Mr. Michie** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the number of pensioners that will be on income support in 2030 if the income support rates go up in line with earnings, on the assumptions given in the technical annex of the White Paper, Cmnd. 9691.

Mr. Newton: Given the major changes there have been since national assistance (the predecessor of the present supplementary benefit scheme) was established in 1948 and the many factors that determine who gets this form of benefit, any estimate of the position of pensioners in relation to income-related asistance in 2030 is very speculative. The Government are committed to a soundly-based social security system. With the expansion of occupational and personal pensions and the growing value of state pensions as more is paid out through the earnings-related scheme along with basic pension, the proportion of pensioners entitled to income support next century is expected to be very much smaller than when it begins. This assumes the value of basic pension relative to the illustrative income support rates in the technical annex to the White Paper Cmnd. 9691 is maintained.

Disabled People (Benefits)

62. **Mr. Bermingham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the operation of the powers whereby local authorities can add to benefits payable in respect of disabled people in private and voluntary homes for the elderly.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Retirement age

74. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now has any proposals to introduce a common retirement age for men and women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mortality Statistics

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the deaths in England in each of the last five years for which records are available attributed to *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table:

Number of deaths from selected diseases, all ages, males, females, England 1980-84

*ICD (9) Number**	*Cause of death*	*Sex*	*Year*				
			1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*†1984*
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	Males	25,306	24,886	24,547	25,055	24,581
		Females	8,021	8,012	8,397	8,567	9,234
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	Males	13,176	11,914	11,643	10,338	9,184
		Females	4,781	4,495	4,572	4,072	3,882
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	Males	83,488	83,135	82,644	83,346	82,920
		Females	60,592	61,887	61,591	62,744	64,218

* International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
† Figures for 1984 are not comparable with those for earlier years because of a coding change.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report*, for the last five years for which records are available, the average age of those who died from *(a)* malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung, *(b)* bronchitis and emphysema and *(c)* ischaemic heart disease, giving the figures for all deaths and broken down by sex.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table:

Average age at death from selected causes, males, females, England and Wales 1980-84

ICD (9) Number*	Cause of death	Sex	Year 1980	1981	1982	1983	†1984
162	Malignant neoplasm of trachea, bronchus and lung	Males	69·0	69·1	69·3	69·6	69·8
		Females	68·5	68·8	68·8	69·4	69·6
490-492	Bronchitis and emphysema	Males	74·3	74·5	74·8	74·9	75·3
		Females	75·9	76·4	76·4	76·8	76·8
410-414	Ischaemic heart disease	Males	69·6	69·9	70·2	70·4	70·7
		Females	77·0	77·3	77·5	77·6	77·9

* International Classification of Diseases 9th revision.
† Figures for 1984 are not comparable with those for earlier years because of a coding change.

Smoking

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many schools in the Wolverhampton area were included in the survey conducted by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys on the numbers of child and teenage smokers.

Mr. Whitney: One school from the Wolverhampton education authority was included in the OPCS survey on smoking among secondary school children in 1984.

Occupational Pension Schemes

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he intends to publish his proposals for regulations on disclosure of information by occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Newton: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) earlier today.

Hospital Buildings (Asbestos)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what grants are available to health authorities which have hospital buildings containing dangerous amounts of asbestos.

Mr. Whitney: None. No special financial provision is made for this. Health authorities are expected to fund any necessary action to deal with asbestos from the total capital available to them, in the same way as any other health and safety measures for which capital expenditure is required.

Rampton Hospital

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what arrangements he proposes for the management of the special hospitals once the Rampton hospital review board completes its period of office in June; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Fowler: The Rampton hospital review board was established in 1981, following the Boynton Committee's inquiry into the management of the hospital. Previously Rampton had been run by a management team, chaired by a medical director reporting directly to officials in my Department. This arrangement still applies to the other special hospitals — Broadmoor, Moss Side and Park Lane. It means centralised management from London and deprives the hospital of local support in translating national policies into local practices.

The establishment of the review board at Rampton provided an intermediate management tier between the hospital management team and my Department. The board is chaired by a business man and has members with relevant interests and experience who know the hospital well and can stand a little apart from the day-to-day business. The board has been able to provide closer oversight of the hospital management team and strengthen its accountability. It has also introduced tighter mechanisms of financial control and has generally encouraged better management practices. The hospital has clearly benefited from the establishment of the Board and its image has also improved.

I have therefore decided that a permanent local board should be established at Rampton hospital when the term of the present review board expires in June. Like the existing board, it will be a special health authority and accountable to me.

The other special hospitals face the same challenges and can also benefit from the wider perspective and fresh insights of an informed local Board. I shall therefore be appointing a local Board for Broadmoor and one for the two Merseyside hospitals, Moss Side and Park Lane to enhance the effectiveness and accountability of the Special Hospitals Service as a whole. The aim is to establish the other two boards by the end of the year. The necessary statutory instruments will be introduced in due course. My overall responsibilities as Secretary of State will remain unchanged.

Hospitals (Thames Regions)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the hospitals within the four Thames regions which still retain accident and emergency units, together with the number of times in the last three months when they have been placed on a treat and transfer basis.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Dental Charges

Mr. Michie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment his Department has made of the effect on patients' choice of treatments of increases in dental charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No such assessment has been made and it would be very difficult to undertake as the charge is only one of many factors which might affect a patient's choice of treatment.

NHS (Contract Cleaners)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many contract cleaning groups or companies have withdrawn from competition for National Health Service cleaning work under the competitive tendering programme during the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not collected centrally.

Medical Records

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the consultations which he has had with medical and consumer organisations about restriction of the circulation of medical records.

Mr. Hayhoe: In October 1984 my Department issued for consultation a draft code on the confidentiality of personal health information (circular DA(84)25). This was sent out widely to health professional and consumer organisations and to all health and local authorities. In the light of the comments received and with the assistance of Sir Douglas Black's interprofessional working group on access to personal health information, work is proceeding to finalise the code for promulgation in a direction under section 17 of the National Health Service Act 1977 later this year.

Operations (Facilities)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are his Department's objectives on the provision of facilities for operations; how he is monitoring their effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We expect each health authority to provide the facilities necessary for emergency and elective surgery and to monitor their effective and efficient use.

NHS (Overseas Visitors)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the *(a)* income per district health authority and *(b)* nationally for each year since 1 October 1982 from charges to overseas visitors using National Health Service facilities.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 2 December 1985, at columns *117-126*.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of lone parent claimants in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* supplementary benefit and *(d)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year in Wales;

(2) what was the number of lone parent claimants in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* supplementary benefit and *(d)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year in Scotland;

(3) what was the number of lone parent claimants in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* supplementary benefit and *(d)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *371*]: The number of lone parents receiving unemployment benefit only cannot be identified separately. The other information requested is as follows:

Benefit	*Number of lone parents in:*			*Latest available date*
	Great Britain	*Scotland*	*Wales*	
Family income supplement	80,000	12,000	4,000	November 1985
Supplementary benefit	475,000	50,000	25,000	December 1983
Supplementary benefit and unemployment benefit	*5,000	—	—	December 1983

* This figure is included in the overall supplementary benefit figure.

DEFENCE

Departmental Staff (Travel Expenditure)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total travelling expenditure incurred by staff in his Department during the last financial year; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Lee: The total indentifiable travelling expenditure incurred by civilian staff in my Department while on duty during the last financial year (1984-85) was £20·726 million. The corresponding figures for each of the previous five years are:

Financial year	*£ million*
1979-80	15·101
1980-81	14·804
1981-82	14·346
1982-83	17·816
1983-84	19·101

Royal Yacht Britannia

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a table showing the dates and costs of refits of the Royal Yacht Britannia since 1960, including the estimated cost of the refit planned for 1985-86.

Mr. Lee: The next refit of HMY Britannia is currently planned to start in January 1987. Because the Government are considering inviting tenders from private sector shipyards the estimated cost is commercially confidential. Details of previous refits since 1960 are given in the table.

Although these figures are broadly comparable they are not adjusted for changes in accounting conventions, for example, depreciation and other overheads.

Cost of refitting HMY Britannia since 1960

Refit dates	*Total actual production cost £ million*
November 1960 to March 1961	0·194
March 1962 to June 1962	0·063
December 1964 to April 1965	0·324
August 1967 to November 1967	0·234
August 1969 to December 1969	0·474
October 1972 to July 1973	1·782
January 1976 to April 1976	1·379
September 1979 to April 1980	4·915
September 1983 to March 1984	6·692

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Tyneside shipyards will be able to bid for the refit of the royal yacht.

Mr. Lee: If the Government decide to invite tenders from commercial shipyards for the refit of HMY Britannia, the invitation will extend to all suitable shipyards in the United Kingdom which meet the necessary standards.

Service Establishments

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army establishments exist in the United Kingdom and overseas; and what is his estimate of the value of other buildings, facilities and stores; and if he will give similar figures for the Royal Navy.

Mr. Lee: There are approximately 500 major army units and establishments in the United Kingdom and an army presence in 74 main locations overseas. The navy has 65 principal establishments in the United Kingdom and a further four overseas.

No estimate is readily available of the value of buildings, facilities and stores, and the assembly of this information would involve a disproportionate amount of effort in both the Ministry of Defence and the Property Services Agency.

Service Personnel (Casualties)

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish details of the number of members of the armed forces who were killed while training in the years 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Lee: The numbers of regular Service personnel killed during schedule training — including flying accidents—and exercises were as follows:

	Number
1982	33
1983	32
1984	29
1985	*24

* Provisional figures only

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence in which Ministry of Defence establishments experiments are carried out on animals; and for what purpose.

Mr. Lee: It is not the practice to list establishments at which animal experiments are carried out. Experiments at Ministry of Defence establishments involving the use of animals are mainly directed at developing defensive measures against chemical attack. It is also necessary to ensure protection against biological warfare. Other work includes medical research, such as the study of wounds and the diagnosis of disease. No animals are used to practice surgery, or in work to improve weapons or ammunition performance. All animals are deeply anaesthetised when wounded. All experiments involving live animals are conducted in accordance with current legislation.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what chemical and biological agents have been tested on animals in Ministry of Defence establishments in the last year; and for what purpose.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 22 March 1984 at column *570* in which I explained that, as is the case with many other defence activities, a great deal of the work at the chemical defence establishment must be protected in the interests of national security. It would not be in the national interest to make available detailed information which could enable an informed observer to gain a useful insight into the scope of CDE's work and the line particular research is taking.

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many experiments have been carried out on animals in Ministry of Defence establishments in each of the last five years; and how many animals were involved.

Mr. Lee: The number of experiments notifiable under the Cruelty to Animals Act 1876 carried out in MOD establishments in each of the last five years for which figures are available is as follows. Each separate animal used counts as one experiment.

	Number
1980	20,700
1981	18,200
1982	14,400
1983	9,900
1984	11,332

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many animals have died as a result of tests concerning chemical and biological agents in Ministry of Defence establishments in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lee: Information is not available in the form requested. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my previous answer which gives the number of experiments subject to the Cruelty of Animals Act 1876. It is normal practice to kill an animal painlessly at the end of an experiment.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 February 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Poplars, Blunham

Mr. Lyell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received in relation to an application to fell match poplars at Blunham in Bedfordshire and return the land to horticultural use.

Mrs. Fenner: My right hon. Friend has received only one representation regarding this application, and this was from the owner of the plantation. However, the Forestry Commission is still involved in consultations on the matter with the Mid-Bedfordshire district council and under the normal procedures for dealing with disputed felling licence application it may yet seek my views before giving a decision on the application.

Farmers (Support System)

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether any study has been made by his Department as to how the different types of farmers have benefited from the existing system of support.

Mrs. Fenner: Information about grants and subsidies received by farm businesses, according to type of farming, is collected as part of the farm management survey. The most recent published information is contained in "Farm Incomes in England 1983-84", copies of which are available in the Library of the House. Information relating to 1984-85 for the United Kingdom is expected to be published in a few weeks time.

The total effect of farmers of the existing system of support could be assessed only by making hypothetical assumptions about the alternative policy which might otherwise have obtained.

Animal Welfare (Report)

Mr. Steel asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when his Department will respond to the Farm Animal Welfare Council report; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: The recommendations in the Farm Animal Welfare Council's report on the welfare of livestock when slaughtered by religious methods are under consideration in the light of representations received. We fully recognise the importance attached to both the report and the Government's response.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Burt asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from farmers in the Greater Manchester county area about the exceptional weather aid scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I have received four letters from hon. Members asking me to extend payments under the exceptional weather aid scheme to farmers in the Greater Manchester area. While I sympathise with all farmers who suffered as a result of last year's bad weather but did not qualify for assistance under the scheme, we had to direct the limited resources available to those areas which were most seriously affected. There was inevitably some element of rough justice, but I believe that in broad terms we have achieved our objective of helping those most in need.

Those farmers in Greater Manchester who fall within the less favoured areas will qualify for hill livestock compensatory allowances which will be paid at increased rates for 1986, as I announced on 28 November 1985.

Plant Breeding

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will state the cost of plant breeding rights and national list testing in England; and if he will distinguish therein between administrative and operational costs.

Mrs. Fenner: My Ministry incurs expenditure on these systems both internally and in relation to work performed on its behalf by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany and other bodies. In the financial year 1985-86, internal expenditure, mainly attributable to administration, is estimated at £0·3 million. Payments to NIAB, which account for the bulk of the operational expenditure, are estimated at £0·5 million for plant breeders rights and £1·3 million for national listing. My Ministry also incurs expenditure in respect of plant breeders rights and national listing in Northern Ireland and in respect of the former in Scotland.

Sheep Farming (Damage by Dogs)

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has any proposals concerning damage to sheep farming enterprises by dogs.

Mrs. Fenner: The loss of sheep and other livestock killed by dogs is a matter of concern to the Government. Livestock worrying is an offence under the Dogs (Protection of Livestock) Act 1953, and the maximum fine on the owner or handler of a dog found worrying livestock on agricultural land was raised in 1984 to £400. The Animals Act 1971 makes the keeper of a dog which kills or injures livestock responsible for the damage and liable to a claim for compensation, and under the same legislation farmers may shoot a dog if there is no other way of preventing it attacking their stock.

The problem of worrying is well understood, and I do not believe there are grounds for an inquiry. However, I am aware that the legislation must be supplemented by a vigorous campaign of education, publicity and advice. My Department is contributing to this by continuing its successful publicity campaign launched in 1984.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Nicholls asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Council of Agriculture Ministers meeting held in Brussels on 24 and 25 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The Council had an initial discussion of the Commission's proposals on agricultural prices and

related measures for 1986/87. I pointed to the increasingly serious problems confronting the common agricultural policy and the need for firm measures to deal with them. In general I commended the Commission's determination to place the main emphasis on action through price, but I expressed concern about the proposal to exceed the financial guideline for agricultural expenditure. I made clear my very strong objections in particular to those aspects of the proposals which would differentiate the level of support under the policy to the disadvantage of larger farmers.

The Council adopted, subject to the opinion of the European Parliament, three measures to improve agriculture in particular disadvantaged areas. One of the areas benefiting will be the islands off the northern and western coasts of Scotland (except the Western Isles, which have already been the subject of a similar measure). Provision is made for expenditure on the Scottish measure of 62·5 million ecu over five years, to which the Community will contribute 25 million ecu. This covers improvement of farm structures and infrastructure, improvements in farm houses, assistance for farm tourism and craft industries and management payments for farmers undertaking environmental agreements.

The Council reached an agreement in principle, with Belgium dissenting, on measures enabling starch and sugar to be made available at preferential prices for use in a range of industrial products. The intention is, on the one hand, to encourage these products to be manufactured within the Community rather than outside and, on the other, to ensure reasonable terms of competition between sugar and starch. I obtained an assurance that the arrangements for starch could be extended to certain food products, provided they met the agreed criteria.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Lignite

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the benefit of lignite development for Northern Ireland and of the time scale on which these will accrue.

Dr. Boyson: Lignite development in Northern Ireland offers the possibility of significantly reduced electricity generation cost and the creation of new employment in mining and in the construction of power stations. The first lignite fired power station should come into use in the early to mid-1990s.

Down Development Plan

Mr. Budgen asked the Secretary of State of State for Northern Ireland if he has received the Commissioners' report on the public inquiry held on 22 May 1985 at Downpatrick into objections to the Down development plan; and when he expects to publish it and his own decisions.

Mr. Needham: The report of the Planning Appeals Commission was received on 19 December 1985 and is under consideration by the Department of the Environment. It is likely that a statement on the plan together with the commissioner's report will be published by the end of April 1986.

Plant Breeding

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State of State for Northern Ireland if he will state the cost of plant breeding rights and national list testing in Northern Ireland; and if he will distinguish therein between administrative and operational costs.

Dr. Boyson: Estimated expenditure by the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland on plant breeders rights in 1985-86 is £128,000, of which administrative expenses are £16,000; for national list testing the figures are £107,000 and £17,000 respectively.

Colleges of Education (Students)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State of State for Northern Ireland what are the respective numbers of students at St. Mary's college of education and Stranmillis college of education; what is the respective funding of each college; and what is the respective funding of each student union.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

	St. Mary's	*Stranmillis* £
Student Numbers 1985-86 (Academic Year)	563	566
Recurrent Funding 1985-86 (Financial Year)	£2,245,000	£2,842,000

The level of student union funding is a matter for local determination between a union and its institution within the totality of the institution's recurrent financial position.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Entrapment

44. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will review the guidelines issued to the police on the subject of entrapment; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The Lord Advocate has not issued guidelines to the police on this subject, but a Scottish Office circular issued in 1969 to chief constables makes it absolutely clear that no member of a police force should counsel, incite or procure the commission of a crime. The 1977 High Court judgment in Cook *v.* Skinner gives further guidance. These sources should be sufficient to enable the police to distinguish clearly between entrapment and legitimate crime detection operations.

Public Order Law (Reform)

45. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when the Lord Advocate last met members of the Scottish Law Commission to discuss reform of the law in relation to public order.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: In the course of a recent meeting with the chairman of the Scottish Law Commission my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate discussed the commission's work on the law of mobbing and rioting. Subsequently the chairman has written to the Lord Advocate advising him that the

Commission has decided not to publish a report for the time being. I am arranging for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library.

Driving Offences

47. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been in Scotland in 1986 for driving offences that do not include alcohol or parking.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Statistics in respect of motor vehicle offences for 1986 are not yet available.

Procurators Fiscal

48. **Mr. Bill Walker** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland which procurators fiscal offices are presently under establishment.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Following a recent resignation there is one legal assistant vacancy at the procurator fiscal's office, Linlithgow. Dumbarton and Edinburgh is each short of an officer at the executive officer grade; Dundee, Falkirk and Kilmarnock are each short of one clerical or secretarial grade, and Hamilton is short of two.

Summary Cases (Trials)

49. **Mr. Millan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will make a statement about the transfer of certain types of summary case from a sheriff court to the district courts in Glasgow.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Glasgow has four district courts presided over by stipendiary magistrates, who have the full summary criminal jurisdiction of sheriffs. It is the policy of the procurator fiscal to make full use of these courts and thereby to relieve some of the pressures on the sheriff court which will continue to be fully utilised.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

50. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many prosecutions have taken place under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 in each year since its enactment.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Separate statistics in relation to such prosecutions are not available.

Industrial Tribunals

51. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he will ask the Scottish Law Commission to review legislation relating to the operation of industrial tribunals in Scotland in the light of recent cases involving miners.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: No. Neither I nor my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has any ministerial responsibilities for employment law and it would therefore not be appropriate for the Lord Advocate to refer this matter to the Scottish Law Commission. Responsibility for employment law rests with my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Bills (Standing Order No. 15)

Mr. Evans asked the Lord Privy Seal (1) how many Bills introduced under Standing Order No. 15 were rejected on a Division in each separate Session of Parliament from May 1979 to November 1985;

(2) how many Bills were introduced under Standing Order No. 15 in each separate Session of Parliament from May 1979 until November 1985.

Mr. Biffen: There follows a list of the number of motions for leave to bring in Bills under the ten-minute rule—Standing Order No. 15—negatived on Division and agreed to.

Session	*Negatived on Division*	*Agreed to*
1979-80	11	63
1980-81	15	33
1981-82	6	50
1982-83	4	30
1983-84	6	66
1984-85	13	43

Mr. Evans asked the Lord Privy Seal how many Bills were introduced under Standing Order No. 15 by Labour hon. Members have been enacted in each Session of Parliament from May 1979 to November 1985.

Mr. Biffen: One — in Session 1982-83, Solvent Abuse (Scotland) Act, introduced by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall).

Government Bills

Mr. Evans asked the Lord Privy Seal how many Bills introduced by Her Majesty's Government received a Second Reading in each Session of Parliament from May 1979 to November 1985.

Mr. Biffen: Information of this sort may be obtained from the Return of Public Bills, published sessionally as a House of Commons paper.

ENVIRONMENT

Disabled Council Tenants

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) on 29 November 1985, whether he has, as an exception to the policy in circular 26/85, approved any applications by local authorities for the payment of Exchequer contribution in respect of grants for disabled council tenants.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Wales and I are aware of the special needs of disabled people and recognise that it may be necessary for adaptation to their homes to be carried out quickly to meet those needs. We have therefore decided to make a general exception to the policy in circular 26/85 (Welsh Office 54/85) as regards home improvement grants for the adaptation of local authority dwellings by disabled council tenants.

It will no longer be necessary for local authorities to refer individual applications to the Departments for the payment of Exchequer contribution in respect of grants

under part VII of the Housing Act 1974, given by a local authority which contributes all or part of the tenant's share of the cost. In future, Exchequer contribution will be payable in the usual way in respect of such cases. The Departments are informing local authorities of this decision.

Derelict Land

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the acreage of land shown in the derelict land register in respect of each of the parliamentary authorities listed in his answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 28 January, *Official Report*, column *470*.

Mr. John Patten: My Department does not maintain a register of derelict land. Registers of unused and underused publicly-owned land were set up under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. On 20 February the amount of land shown on these registers as owned by the authorities listed in the answer of 28 January was as follows:

	Local Authority	*Amount of registered land (acres)*
1	Leeds	1,264
2	Kingston-upon-Hull	892
3	Sunderland	845
4	Manchester	646
5	Liverpool	503
6	Bradford	489
7	Sheffield	480
8	Wakefield	471
9	Gateshead	460
10	Rotherham	445
11	Preston	434
12	Rochdale	433
13	Coventry	421
14	Barnsley	410
15	Kirklees	389
16	Dudley	359
17	North Tyneside	344
18	Nottingham	281
19	Greater London Council	268
20	Calderdale	263
21	Tameside	247
22	Leicester	242
23	Oldham	235
24	Salford	217
25	Burnley	212
26	Birmingham	210
27	Hillingdon	197
28	Walsall	196
29	Wolverhampton	195
30	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	173
31	Sandwell	169
32	Wirral	167
33	Derby	133
34	Norwich	117
35	Rochester-upon-Medway	80
36	Newham	65
37	Greenwich	46
38	Lambeth	44
39	Southwark	40
40	Easington	33
41	Haringey	33
42	Brent	27
43	Tower Hamlets	24
44	Lewisham	11
45	Islington	10
46	Hackney	7
47	Hammersmith and Fulham	2
48	Camden	0
49	Wandsworth	0
50	Westminster, City of	0

Yorkshire Water Authority

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the total acreage of land owned or leased as water catchment areas by the Yorkshire water authority;

(2) if he will identify the various areas by name, the specified acreage of each site, and the geographical position of water catchment areas owned or rented by the Yorkshire water authority.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not held centrally. I suggest that the right hon. Member approaches the Yorkshire water authority.

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many fishing associations have permission to fish within the Yorkshire water authority area; and if he will identify them by name and total numbers involved.

Mr. John Patten: This information is not available within my Department. I suggest that the right hon. Member approaches the Yorkshire water authority.

Local Authority Dwellings and Derelict Land

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish in the *Official Report* in respect of each local authority area participating in the partnership programme and each other designated district the number of local authority dwellings which have been empty for more than 12 months and the amount of derelict land shown in the derelict land register.

Sir George Young: Following are the numbers of local authority dwellings vacant for more than a year and the amounts of local authority land in the registers of unused and underused land:

	Local authority dwellings vacant more than a year at 1 April 1985 *Number*	*Local authority owned land on the land register* *Acres*
Partnership areas		
Gateshead	385	460
Newcastle upon Tyne	277	173
Hackney	1,319	7
Islington	547	10
Lambeth	460	44
Birmingham	261	210
Manchester	1,505	646
Salford	465	217
Liverpool	3,588	503
Programme authorities		
Middlesbrough	52	623
North Tyneside	317	344
South Tyneside	40	67
Sunderland	814	845
Kingston upon Hull	16	892
Sheffield	637	480
Bradford	710	489

	Local authority dwellings vacant more than a year at 1 April 1985 *Number*	*Local authority owned land on the land register* *Acres*
Leeds	417	1,264
Leicester	138	242
Nottingham	31	281
Brent	319	27
Hammersmith and Fulham	150	2
Tower Hamlets	790	24
Wandsworth	687	0
Coventry	296	421
Sandwell	350	169
Wolverhampton	338	195
Bolton	0	461
Oldham	479	235
Rochdale	160	433
Blackburn	82	828
Knowsley	283	440
Wirral	3	167
Other designated districts		
Hartlepool	64	123
Langbaurgh	8	279
Barnsley	102	410
Doncaster	138	408
Rotherham	160	445
Ealing	55	45
Greenwich	137	46
Haringey	335	33
Lewisham	690	10
Newham	672	65
Southwark	1,581	40
Walsall	65	196
Wigan	53	477
Burnley	284	212
St. Helens	19	177
Sefton	5	340

Sources:

Vacant dwellings from 1985 housing investment programme returns.

Registers of unused and underused publicly owned land set up under part X of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Southwark Law Project

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the future of the Southwark law project when its urban aid grant expires in 1987.

Mr. John Patten: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment received representations last summer from the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and one of his constituents about the future funding of the Southwark law project. They were both informed that it is for the London borough of Southwark to decide how best to replace the urban programme funding when its time expires in 1987.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what safeguards the London Docklands Development Corporation has to seek to prevent the manipulation of the affordable homes schemes to secure the benefits of the scheme for persons not so entitled; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The LDDC has recently reviewed the operation of its "affordable housing policy" and taken steps to prevent the abuse of the priority arrangements for local tenants. Priority is given to local authority tenants living within the docklands boroughs, who can provide evidence of tenancy and who have been on the electoral roll at their council address for 12 months. After six weeks on the market, the builder may then take reservations from open market purchasers.

All purchasers of affordable homes (that is priced at £40,000 or less) are now required by covenant to pay the LDDC on resale a proportion of the difference between the affordable selling price and the open market selling price at the time of the original reservation. The proportion to be paid declines in stages over a five-year period.

Purchasers are also required to sign a declaration to the effect that they will take occupation of the dwelling being purchased. LDDC has publicised these new arrangements within the local communities.

Radiation

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the exposure to radiation each year which is experienced, respectively, by a person living five miles from a nuclear power station and a person using a colour television set in the family home for four hours a day.

Mr. Waldegrave: The National Radiological Protection Board advises me that direct exposure from a television set operating four hours a day will be above 5 nanoSieverts per year. There will be no direct radiation exposure five miles away from an operating advanced gas-cooled nuclear reactor and exposure to authorised discharges will be about 1 microsievert per year.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all accidents at Sellafield, Windscale, Drigg and associated sites involving release of radiation which have been notified to the Irish Government for the purpose of their monitoring of possible radiological consequences, since 1956; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: With the exception of the Windscale fire of 1957 there have been no accidents at any of these sites which would have necessitated such monitoring. Since 1977 the Irish Government have been furnished by the Health and Safety Executive with regular quarterly statements of incidents at nuclear installations in Britain, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

In addition, my Department has informed the Irish Government of all incidents which have resulted in the release of significant quantities of radioactivity.

Council House Sales

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council dwellings have been sold in Reading since April 1979; what proportion this represents of the April 1979 housing stock; and how many council dwellings remain in council ownership.

Sir George Young: Estimates of sales of council dwellings from April 1979 to September 1985 and of the stock owned by the local authority at 1 April 1985 are given in the table which was laid in the Library in response to a question from the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Murphy) on 19 December, at column 259. Sales reported by Reading represent 16·2 per cent. of its April 1979 stock.

Reading (Urban Aid)

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what urban aid was given to Reading in 1978 and in each subsequent year.

Sir George Young: For the years from 1978-79 to 1985-86 inclusive, Reading borough councils estimated expenditure under the traditional urban programme totalled £1,772,845, of which 75 per cent. is being met by central Government.

The yearly breakdown is:

Year	*Amount £*
1978-79	8,122
1979-80	22,111
1980-81	62,188
1981-82	208,852
1982-83	236,908
1983-84	349,317
1984-85	*581,182
1985-86	*304,165

* Estimated.

News International Planning Permission

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *35*, he will place in the Library the information available to the London Docklands Development Corporation on the terms of the planning permission granted to News International prior to the existence of the London Docklands Development Corporation.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1986, c. *340*]: I have today placed the information requested in the Library of the House.

Local Government Act 1985

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to make a scheme under the provisions of section 59(3) of the Local Government Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has now made the scheme promised in the announcement made by my noble Friend the Minister of Planning and Regional Affairs on 13 November 1985, at columns 379-87, in another place. Full details of the scheme — the Government Reorganisation (Reduction of Redundancy Payment Cases) Scheme 1986 — are being published with guidance notes in a joint circular (DOE5/86: SDD6/86: WOI3/86) issued today. The circular, issued by my Department, and the Scottish and Welsh Offices, is addressed to all local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, and to the residuary bodies which were established under the Local Government Act 1985 to wind up the affairs of the GLC and the six metropolitan county councils. I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library.

The scheme implements the decisions which were summarised in the announcement made on 13 November and communicated to the main interested parties at that time. It is designed to stimulate the creation of additional job opportunities for GLC and MCC employees by encouraging local authorities at large to allow some of their own employees to retire early and to fill the vacancies so created by recruiting GLC or MCC employees who might otherwise be left redundant at abolition.

The Government hope that authorities will make full use of the scheme, thereby retaining the experience and expertise of such officers in local government and minimising redundancies.

Watercourses (Mercury Contamination)

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those rivers and watercourses or areas of still water where the levels of mercury are such as to present a hazard to the public;

(2) which stretches of rivers and watercourses in England contain levels of mercury which are *(a)* above and *(b)* over twice the level of the limit set down by the European Economic Community.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 January 1986, c. *297*]: The quality standard for mercury in fresh water required by EC directives 82/176/EEC and 84/156/EEC is an average annual concentration of 1 ug/l total mercury. Apart from areas immediately downstream of discharge points, where the standard is not required to be complied with, it is known to be exceeded at only two places (in both cases by more than a factor of two).

(a) In the Trent Mersey canal at Northwich. The quality standard is not met because of the very limited dilution available, although the discharge of mercury is well within the limit values for emissions laid down in the directive.

(b) In the River Rother at Stavely. When new treatment plant is commissioned later this year it is anticipated that the quality standard will be met.

At neither of these sites, nor any other affected by major discharges of mercury, is water abstracted for public supply, or is there known to be any hazard to the public.

PRIME MINISTER

Education Policies

Mr. Freud asked the Prime Minister whether she will make a statement on her intentions in respect of *(a)* education vouchers, *(b)* reintroduction of direct grant schools or status and *(c)* expansion of the assisted places scheme.

The Prime Minister: The Government continue to consider all possibilities for improving school education.

WALES

Breast Cancer

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those district health authorities in Wales which currently screen all symptomless women aged 50 years and older for breast cancer as a matter of routine; at what cycle of frequency such screening takes place; and what are the future plans for his Department for developing these services.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No district health authorities in Wales routinely screen women for breast cancer at present.

An expert working group on breast cancer screening was appointed in July 1985 under the chairmanship of

Professor Sir Patrick Forrest to consider the situation in the United Kingdom. It has produced an interim report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The report concluded that there was a clinical case for providing mammographic facilities and screening for symptomless women aged 50 and over, together with the necessary back-up services. This will be considered in detail in the final report, which will set out policy options, their costs and benefits and the overall implications for the NHS. The final report is expected later this year.

Higher and Further Education

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of Welsh students concluding secondary education in July 1985 at the age of 18 years progressed to *(a)* university courses, *(b)* polytechnic courses and *(c)* any further education courses; and if he will give comparable figures for each year from 1980.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The information is not available in the form requested. Estimates from a sample of leavers from maintained and independent schools in Wales indicate intentions of entry into full-time further education as follows:

Percentage of school leavers aged 18 and over intending to enter full-time further education

Type of education	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*
Degree and teacher training courses	48	49	44	45	43
Other full-time further and higher education	18	19	21	21	24
All further and higher education	66	68	65	65	66

Comparable information for school leavers in 1984-85 is not yet available.

Forestry Commission Land

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many acres of Forestry Commission land in Wales were sold last year; what were the corresponding figures for the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Sales records are maintained by financial years to 31 March. In the period from 1 April 1985 the Forestry Commission has sold 2,143 hectares of land in Wales. Figures for the previous 10 years are as follows:

Year to 31 March	*Land sold (Hectares)*
1976	316
1977	200
1978	507
1979	221
1980	396
1981	361
1982	1,743
1983	1,450
1984	3,347
1985	3,522

Mr. Geraint Howells asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to sell off to private buyers all the land held by the Forestry Commission in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr on 8 November 1984, at columns 6-7, setting out the Government's policy on disposals by the Forestry Commission. As in all other areas of Government activity, policy is kept under regular review.

ENERGY

Sellafield

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what was the actual dose level in rad rem on mSv calculated to have been received by the one individual worker who at Sellafield in February was exposed in one incident to the equivalent of one year's permissible dose;

(2) what criteria were applied by the Health and Safety Executive or the Nuclear Industries Inspectorate in their assessment that one individual worker at Sellafield had received in February the equivalent in one incident of one year's permissible radiation dose;

(3) what method was applied by the Health and Safety Executive or the Nuclear Industries Inspectorate in their assessment that one individual worker at Sellafield had received in February 1986 the equivalent in one incident of one year's permissible radiation dose.

Mr. Goodlad: Final assessment of the dose level must await the results of biological monitoring. The present assessment of intake is, I am advised by the Nuclear Industries Inspectorate and British Nuclear Fuels, based on measurements of the plutonium alpha activity on a personal air sampler worn by the individual concerned, as interpreted by ICRP published data relating intake to consequential doses, and the statutory dose limits in the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985. If the assessment is confirmed, it is estimated that the worker received an intake which will commit him to a dose of about 50 rem (500 mSv) to his bone surfaces, which is equivalent to the current statutory dose limit for one year set by the regulations. This dose would be delivered at a rate of about 1 rem (10 mSv) per annum.

EMPLOYMENT

Disabled Persons

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General how many officers in his Department, including local offices, deal totally or mainly with issues relating to the employment of disabled people; and how this figure compares to the corresponding figures five years ago.

Mr. Lang: There are currently around 1,440 officers in the Department of Employment group dealing totally or mainly with issues relating to the employment of disabled people. The corresponding figure five years ago was

around 1,820, but since then there have been a number of important changes in the way this work is organised. In particular other mainstream employment service staff have been given responsibility for helping disabled people whose needs are similar to other job seekers; and thus many of them individually spend part of their time on such work.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Paymaster General if he will list the help being provided by his Department for the young unemployed in West Hertfordshire.

Mr. Lang: Available information is as follows:

(1) 424 places offering YTS training are available in the Dacorum local authority district.
(2) 217 people are taking part in the community programme in the Hemel Hempstead area.
(3) In the Hemel Hempstead area 49 young people are being supported under the young workers scheme. young people from west Hertfordshire will also be able to benefit from employment and training measures in neighbouring areas.

Manchester

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Paymaster General if he will list the places in Manchester he visited on 10 February; and which Members of Parliament were advised of the details of this visit in advance.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: On 10 February I began my visit to Manchester at the regional office of the Manpower Services Commission for a meeting with members of the city action team. I then had discussions with the leader of Manchester city council, Councillor Stringer, and then visited the Moss Side link programme. My visit ended with the churches work scheme in Moss Side.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), and the hon. Members for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland), and for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) were all informed of my visit in advance, and the hon. Member for Manchester, Central was also given details of my programme.

Mr. Lloyd asked the Paymaster General why he chose the title Moss Side-Lloyd street for the area of Manchester involved in the recent announcement of inner cities; how much of this area he expects to lie outside the Stretford constituency; what information he provided to hon. Members about this project; to which hon. Members and when.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We identified the area in Manchester we had in mind for the pilot initiative in these general terms because we based our choice on the 1981 census wards of Moss Side and Lloyd street. A significant part of these wards lies outside Stretford constituency. however, I will take final decisions on the precise boundaries of this and the other pilot areas only after further local consultation.

I wrote to the hon. members most concerned with details of the initiative on 6 February. I apologise for the fact that due to an oversight I did not write to the hon. Member until 17 February.

Youth Training

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Paymaster General how many jobs are currently being provided in Reading by YTS and other schemes for which his Department is responsible; and how this compares with the number of jobs provided in or near April 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Some 3,200 people are currently supported by our employment and training measures in Reading. Because of the basis on which local statistics are collected, an unknown proportion may fall in areas outside the local authority district. I regret that we do not hold local figures for 1979.

Job Start Scheme

Mr. Gardiner asked the Paymaster General what reductions have been achieved so far in the totals of long-term unemployed in each of the nine pilot areas in which the job start scheme is operating.

Mr. Lang: Analysis of unemployment by duration are available only on a quarterly basis. The last count was undertaken on 9 January, only three days after the pilot schemes had begun. The analysis of the next count, undertaken on 10 April, is expected in late May.

For monitoring purposes, however, we have collected information on the numbers of people leaving the unemployment count after being contacted by the Manpower Services Commission under the initiative. The details for each of the nine pilot areas after the first six weeks of the scheme are as follows:

	Number
Dundee	86
Billingham	42
Preston	87
Huddersfield	62
Stoke-on-Trent	163
Port Talbot & Neath	57
Plymouth	66
Crawley and Horsham	111
Ealing	75
	749

These figures include those who left the count any time after receiving letters from the MSC inviting them to in-depth counselling interviews, either before or after their interviews. It is not possible yet to say what proportion of these people would have left without the help of the scheme.

Community Industry

Mr. Hughes asked the Paymaster General how many persons aged 18 to 25 years are presently engaged in the community industry scheme in the borough of Knowsley; and what change in numbers there has been over the past year.

Mr. Lang: The community industry scheme is for disadvantaged young people aged 17 to 19 years of age. The Kirkby and Knowsley units both recruit from within the Metropolitan borough of Knowsley. In January 1986 it employed 141 young people aged 18 years and over. The corresponding figure for January 1985 was 161.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Clergy Marriages

Mr. Frank Field asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners,

if he will place in the Library a copy of any submissions the Church Commissioners made to the House of Bishops' working party on the break-up of clergy marriages and any papers they have subsequently prepared following the publication of the working party's report.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The commissioners did not make formal submissions to the working party, nor have they prepared papers subsequently. As I explained in my answer to the hon. Member on 22 April 1985, representatives of the commissioners attended all the meetings of the working party and offered information and advice as and when required. I have arranged to place in the Library a copy of a note concerning the application of the Church Commissioners' funds prepared by the Church Commissioners official solicitor and submitted by the Third Church Estates Commissioner, a member of the working party.

DEFENCE

Radiation Illness, Coulport

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the issues raised about radiation illness at Coulport by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow in the debates on the Royal Navy on 6 February, *Official Report*, column 517, and which he undertook to investigate, *Official Report*, column 532.

Mr. Lee: No illness caused by radiation is known to have occurred at Coulport. The Health and Safety Executive is investigating a recent suggestion that certain health problems at the depot might be associated with radiation; however, their investigation is not yet complete. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman very shortly.

Apprentices (Rosyth)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the estimate for *(a)* apprentice intake and *(b)* the number of apprentices in training at Rosyth dockyard for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Lee: The estimate for apprentice entry at Rosyth dockyard in 1986-87 is 144. Following entry of this number, and allowing for those completing training, there should be some 649 apprentices under training at Rosyth in the latter part of 1986-87; this would be the highest level since 1981-82.

The number of apprentices to be trained in future years, which would include decisions on the 1987-88 level of intake and the number then under training, will be a matter for discussion between the dockyard commercial operator and this Department.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police (Firearms)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he proposes to review the procedures relating to the use of firearms by the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: I am aware of and understand the public concern about the use of firearms by the police in recent months. I have therefore set in hand a thorough review of the relevant procedures. A working group, under Home Office chairmanship, will look at such matters as the selection and training of police officers in the use of firearms, the procedures for authorisation to issue firearms for particular operations, the existing instructions and guidelines regarding issue and use, and the choice of weapons and ammunition. The review of policy in these areas will involve representatives of police forces and appropriate staff associations. I am also in touch with the chairman of the independent Police Complaints Authority, who has sent me some general observations in advance of the conclusion of the authority's work on recent incidents involving firearms. In order not to prejudice any criminal or disciplinary proceedings which are pending, or could arise, from those incidents the authority cannot at this stage publish a report on these matters, but it intends to do so.

I am concerned that the review should work quickly but also take account of as wide a range of opinion as possible. To that end I would invite police authorities and any other bodies, organisations or individuals to submit their views in writing to the Home Office by 31 March 1986.

When the review is completed I shall advise the House of its conclusions.

IBA (Levies)

Mr. Parris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the Independent Broadcasting Authority levies.

Mr. Hurd: In consultation with the Treasury and the IBA, my Department has reviewed the arrangements in the Broadcasting Act 1981 for additional payments by independent television and radio programme contractors (the levies). The review was initiated because of the Government's concern that the high marginal tax rate arising from those arrangements taken together with corporation tax might be a disincentive to efficiency. I have placed in the Library a copy of the report containing the outcome of the review. In considering its recommendations we have also taken account of the 29th Report from the Committee of Public Accounts 1984-85. A Treasury Minute published today sets out the decisions which the Government have now taken. As explained in that minute, we have decided to take an early legislative opportunity to modify the levy provisions along the lines recommended by the review, so that the profits base on which the ITV levy would continue to be calculated includes profits from provision of programmes outside the United Kingdom. This will enable the marginal tax rate to be reduced, so as to encourage efficiency within the ITV companies. However, in order to preserve an incentive to exports, we shall propose a rate of levy on overseas profits at about half the standard rate.

The opportunity will also be taken to include in our legislative proposals a number of minor modifications to the levy arrangements identified by the review. These will include arrangements to permit any balance of the "free slice" of profits (the proportion of profits which attracts a nil rate of levy) which is not utilised against domestic profits to be carried across to overseas profits; and the minimum level of free slice, as now expressed in cash terms, will be reviewed from time to time. It is also proposed to make changes to the provisions governing

refunds to the companies from the Consolidated Fund in the case of overpayment; to extend the provisions containing reserve powers to prescribe a company's minimum levy bill in the event of excessive expenditure; and to permit companies to offset trading losses which are relevant for levy purposes against leviable profits in future years to the end of their contracts. After careful consideration, however, we have concluded that it would not be right for this latter provision to have retrospective effect, as contemplated in the review; and by the same token we are not persuaded of the need to modify the accounting arrangements governing preliminary expenditure in the way recommended.

We also propose to implement the recommendation in relation to the radio levy by reducing the rate of levy to zero. The IBA has since concluded that it would not be practicable to make formal arrangements for the additional sums accruing to those companies who would otherwise have paid levy to be redistributed, and the Government accepts that view.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of the nature of the research reported in "Behavioural Processes 1983," volume 8, pages 277-287, carried out at University College, Swansea, on mice restrained in perspex tubes, he will revoke the licences issued under the Cruelty to Animals Act to the experimenters concerned; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No. I am satisfied that these experiments were lawfully carried out and properly conducted in accordance with the terms and conditions of the licences of those responsible for the work.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animals have been subjected to experiments in Scottish laboratories in each of the past 10 years; and how many of these animals have been deprived of their sight, in one eye or both; where these experiments were conducted; what species of animals were used as experimental subjects; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The only information which could be provided in the time available is the number of experiments on living animals commenced at registered places in Scotland in the years 1982-84, which were 257,000 in 1982, 262,000 in 1983 and 254,000 in 1984. Experiments involving the deprivation of sight are not separately identified in the information collected centrally.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether vehicle registration numbers of any employees or agents of News International currently employed at Wapping, or National Graphical Association or Society for Graphic and Allied Trades members who are currently in dispute with News International, have been placed in the stolen or suspect vehicle index of the police national computer; and whether there are plans to do so.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No vehicle registration numbers of persons involved in the News International dispute are held on the police national computer by virtue of having been used during that dispute, nor are there any plans to hold such information.

Police Computers

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what records will be kept by the police when personal data is disclosed to them via the non-disclosure provisions of the Data Protection Act; and what written statement will be sent to the data user by the police to show that the disclosure of personal date was by that route.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A working party of the Association of Chief Police Officers is currently considering this and other aspects of the Data Protection Act as it applies to police records with a view to issuing guidance to forces before the provisions of the Act come into force.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the replacement strategy and plans for the police national computer and the Metropolitan "C" department computer.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The police national computer mainframe hardware will have completed 10 years of continuous service by 1988, but final decisions have not yet been taken as to its replacement. The Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis informs me that he has no immediate plans to replace the Metropolitan police "C" department computer, but that he intends to renew some items of hardware to ensure that the system remains fully operational.

Police Statistics (Reading)

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the commissioner of police for the Thames Valley as to how many uniformed police were employed in Reading in 1978 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that the total strength of Reading division in the Thames Valley police, including both uniformed officers and CID, was 464 on 31 December 1985, compared with 362 on 31 December 1978.

Immigration Service, Heathrow

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provision is being made for *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time interpreters and in which languages in the immigration service at Heathrow airport terminal 4.

Mr. Waddington: The provision of interpretation facilities by the immigration service is currently under review. Until that review is completed, terminal 4 will draw on the pool of eight full-time interpreters at terminal 3, who speak Bengali, Farsi, Gujerati, Hindi, Marathi, Punjabi and Urdu, supplemented by the employment of hourly-paid interpreters in those and other languages, as necessary.

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the establishment *(a)* requested by the staff side and *(b)* given for immigration officers by grade at London Heathrow terminal 4.

Mr. Waddington: The approved allocation is for 96 immigration officers and 16 chief immigration officers. This compares with a complement of 100 immigration officers and 16 chief immigration officers suggested by the Immigration Service Union and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (Immigration Branch).

Fire Service

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to seek to modify the existing arrangements and agreements concerning the pay and conditions of the fire service.

Mr. Giles Shaw: These are matters for negotiation between representatives of fire authorities and their employees, on the National Joint Council for Local Authorities' Fire Brigades, on which my right hon. Friend is not represented.

Styal Prison

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the termination of Mr. James Anderson's appointment as governor of Her Majesty's prison, Styal.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Anderson's transfer from Her Majesty's prison Styal to Her Majesty's Youth Custody Centre, Hindley was one of a series of routine governor-grade moves made for operational and career reasons.

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations the prison department has received from prison staff employed at Her Majesty's prison, Styal, during the period of Mr. James Anderson's employment there as governor; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Mr. Anderson has held regular meetings with the local branch of the Prison Officers' Association while governor of Styal prison and youth custody centre. The national executive committee of the Prison Officers' Association has also, on two recent occasions, raised matters covering Styal with headquarters and regional officials.

Glen Parva Young Offenders Centre

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many young offenders are currently detained in the Glen Parva young offenders centre; what are their ages; and what is the average and maximum period during which such offenders are kept in that centre.

Mr. Mellor: Information about the time spent in a particular establishment on remand or under sentence is not recorded centrally. The population of Glen Parva youth custody centre on 31 December 1985 is given by age in the table. The information available shows the average length of sentence of these 434 young offenders to be about 14 months. The longest sentence being served was 5 years detention under section 53(2) of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933. Remission, parole and time served on remand would reduce the time served under sentence.

Population of Glen Parva yought custody centre on 31 December 1985: by age

Age	Number
15	13
16	50
17	81
18	90
19	89
20	97
21	14
Total	434

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the estimated rate of recidivism among inmates released from the Glen Parva young offenders centre.

Mr. Mellor: Reconviction rates for youth custody trainees are not yet available.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff are employed at the Glen Parva young offenders centre; what are their categories; and what is the total monthly cost of such staffing.

Mr. Mellor: The total number of staff employed by the Home Office at the Glen Parva youth custody centre and remand centre as at 1 February 1986 was 342, consisting of 253½ prison officer grades, 10 governor grades, 26½ administration grades, two doctors, five psychologists, 14 instructors, two chaplains, six other non-industrial grades and 23 industrial grades. The average monthly salary cost (including overtime, other allowances, and national insurance but excluding accommodation costs) for the current financial year is £420,145.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total weekly cost and what is the average cost per offender of feeding the inmates at the Glen Parva young offenders centre.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that in the financial year 1984-85 the average total weekly cost and the average weekly cost per inmate of feeding the inmates at Glen Parva youth custody centre and remand centre were £6,630 and £10·50 respectively. These figures cover, as well as the cost of the food itself, all other costs, including staff costs, associated with feeding the inmates.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current routine at the Glen Parva young offenders centre if an inmate wishes to see the doctor; and in what respects that routine has changed since the beginning of 1985.

Mr. Mellor: If an inmate at Glan Parva youth custody centre wishes to see the medical officer he is given an opportunity to do so. Screening procedures were introduced at the centre in October 1984 to enable inmates reporting sick but not seeking to see the medical officer to be assessed by a hospital officer for treatment involving non-prescription medicines.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of keeping an inmate at the Glen Parva young offenders centre in the hospital unit of that centre.

Mr. Mellor: The average weekly cost of keeping a person in Glen Parva youth custody centre and remand centre during the financial year 1984-85 was £234. Information is not available on the cost of keeping a person in particular locations within an establishment.

Interception of Communications Act 1985

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Interception of Communications Act 1985 will be brought into force; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The provisions of the Interception of Communications Act will come into force on 10 April 1986.

The following have accepted appointment as members of the tribunal under section 7 and schedule 2 to the Act:

The Right hon. The Lord Fraser of Tullybelton—President
Sir Cecil Clothier KCB QC—Vice-President
Mr. David Calcutt QC
Mr. Ivor Guild CBE WS
Mr. Peter Scott QC

The right hon. Lord Justice Lloyd has been appointed commissioner under section 8 of the Act. The right hon. The Lord Bridge of Harwich, who has been judicial monitor of interception arrangements since 1982, will relinquish this appointment when Lord Justice Lloyd takes up his duties.

Police Stations (Lay Visitors)

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice has been offered to chief constables and police authorities on the establishment of schemes of lay visitors to police stations.

Mr. Hurd: Guidelines for the establishment and organisation of lay visitor schemes have today been issued to chief constables and police authorities in England and Wales. These are based on the procedures devised for the pilot schemes, and have been revised in the light of experience of lay-visiting to date. The guidelines are intended to commend the principle of lay visiting, and to provide a basis for those considering the establishment of schemes, but I have made it clear that they are open to local modification as circumstances demand. I shall welcome an assessment of the guidelines in the light of experience, so that further modifications can be considered where necessary.

Like my predecessors I welcome the principle of lay visitors, first proposed in Lord Scarman's report on the Brixton disorders, as a practical means of developing public confidence in the police treatment of offenders. Their value was especially demonstrated in the aftermath of last autumn's disorders, and I hope that consideration will be given to the establishment of lay visitor panels wherever they might have a part to play in the development of improved police-community relations.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Teachers' Pay

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish a table to show the salary at 1 April 1985, 1 November 1985, 1 April 1986 and 1 November 1986 for teachers in inner London *(a)* entering the profession as new graduates, *(b)* at the top of scale 1, *(c)* at the mid-point of scale 2, *(d)* at the bottom of scale 3, *(e)* at the top of scale 2, *(f)* at the top of scale 3 and for heads in inner London, *(g)* of group primary schools and *(h)* of group 12 secondary schools, if (i) the formal offer of 12 September 1985, (ii) the informal offer of 14 October 1985 or (iii) the agreement of 24 January 1986 were implemented; and, for each of the categories specified, what is the salary at present actually received.

Mr. Chris Patten: The table shows the current salary rates of teachers in inner London, in the categories listed, and what they would have received under the formal offer of 12 September 1985, the informal offer of 14 October 1985 and the provisional agreement of 24 January—so far as this can be determined from the terms of the offers made.

The current salary rated were set on 1 April 1984 and include inner London weighting of £1,038 but exclude other allowances. The rates assume normal incremental progression but do not take account of additional promotions that would be unlocked in the case of the 12 September offer. Nor do they take account of any pay increase from 1 April 1986, which has yet to be negotiated.

Inner London Teachers' Salary rates at 1 April and 1 November 1985, and 1 April and 1 November 1986 if (i) the formal offer of 12 September 1985, (ii) the informal offer of 14 October 1985 or (iii) the agreement of 24 January 1986 were implemented; and the salary at present actually received.

Category	*(a) New Entrant Graduate*	*(b) Top of Scale 1*	*(c) Mid-point Scale 2*	*(d) Bottom Scale 3*	*(e) Top of Scale 2*	*(f) Top of Scale 3*	*(g) Head Group 2*	*(h) Head Group 12*
Current Salary	7,290	9,594	9,042	8,772	10,635	12,069	12,111	21,744
(i) With implementation of improvements offered in Burnham Committee on 12 September								
1 April 1985	7,770	10,074	9,522	9,252	11,115	12,620	12,664	22,779
1 November 1985	8,073	10,494	9,882	9,603	11,211	12,732	12,775	22,986
1 April 1986	8,073	10,494	9,882	9,603	11,547	13,125	12,775	22,986
1 November 1986	8,316	10,812	10,161	10,494	11,547	13,125	14,064	25,401
OR *(ii) With implementation of informal offer of 14 October*								
1 April 1985	7,721	10,184	9,594	9,306	11,297	12,830	12,875	23,173
1 November 1985	7,975	10,184	9,889	9,594	11,297	12,830	12,875	23,173
1 April 1986	8,014	10,236	9,939	9,642	11,355	12,896	12,941	23,297
1 November 1986	8,275	10,236	10,235	9,939	11,355	12,896	12,941	23,297
OR *(iii) With implementation of agreement of 24 January*								
1 April 1985	7,721	10,184	9,594	9,306	11,297	12,830	12,875	23,173

Category	(a) New Entrant Graduate	(b) Top of Scale 1	(c) Mid-point Scale 2	(d) Bottom Scale 3	(e) Top of Scale 2	(f) Top of Scale 3	(g) Head Group 2	(h) Head Group 12
1 November 1985	7,975	10,184	9,889	9,594	11,297	12,830	12,875	23,173
1 April 1986	8,075	10,321	10,017	9,718	11,451	13,007	13,052	23,504
1 November 1986	8,342	10,321	10,321	10,022	11,451	13,007	13,052	23,504

Notes:

1 New entrants assumed to have entered at point 4 of scale 1 on 1 September 1984.

2 Top of scale 1 and top of scale 2 teachers assumed not to be entitled to good honours graduate additions.

3 Mid-point scale 2 taken as point 7.

4 Headteachers assumed to be at their salary maximum throughout.

5 All examples assume assimilation without promotion to the new scales envisaged in the 12 September package.

6 Examples assume that the 14 October informal offer comprised 6.9 per cent on all scales from 1 April 1985 rising to 7·5 per cent on all scales on 31 March 1986.

7 The January agreement consists of a 6·9 per cent. increase on all scales with effect from 1 April 1985 and an additional 1·6 per cent. on all scales from 31 March 1986, calculated on the 31 March 1985 base.

8 The London area allowance has been added in all cases at the rate of £1,038 per annum.
This applies to teachers serving in "the Inner Area" of London which is defined as "the area of the Inner London education authority and of the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Brent, Ealing, Haringey, Merton and Newham".
This rate was set on 1 April 1984.

Assisted Places

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* for each local education authority in England for pupils of secondary age *(a)* the amount spent within that local education authority on assisted places, *(b)* the numbers of assisted places pupils, *(c)* the average expenditure per assisted places pupil, *(d)* the percentage of the local education authority secondary school budget represented by expenditure on the assisted places scheme and *(e)* the amount spent per manintained pupil, at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Dunn: As regards parts *(a)* and *(e)*, I refer the hon. Member to the replies given to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Hancock) on 10 December 1985 — at col. 568 — and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) on 4 February 1986 — at col. 117 — respectively. The rest of the information requested is as follows:

School Year 1983-84

LEA	Number of assisted pupils at school in area	Average expenditure per assisted pupil (£)	Assisted places expenditure as per cent. of LEA secondary budget†
Barking	Nil	Nil	Nil
Barnet	70	1,730	0·5
Bexley	Nil	Nil	Nil
Brent	Nil	Nil	Nil
Bromley	124	1,239	0·6
Croydon	269	1,215	1·2
Ealing	80	1,270	0·5
Enfield	Nil	Nil	Nil
Haringey	26	2,052	0·2
Harrow	55	*2,226	*0·8
Havering	Nil	Nil	Nil
Hillingdon	17	1,419	0·1
Hounslow	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kingsotn upon Thames	65	1,387	0·9
Merton	82	1,491	0·9
Newham	Nil	Nil	Nil
Redbridge	96	1,300	0·6
Richmond-upon-Thames	177	1,302	2·9
Sutton	38	1,161	0·3
Waltham Forest	65	1,625	0·5
Inner London	1,330	1,492	0·8
Birmingham	221	1,229	0·3
Coventry	105	1,294	0·5
Dudley	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sandwell	Nil	Nil	Nil
Solihull	Nil	Nil	Nil
Walsall	Nil	Nil	Nil
Wolverhampton	134	1,442	0·7
Knowsley	Nil	Nil	Nil
Liverpool	316	1,344	0·9
St. Helens	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sefton	257	1,221	1·2
Wirral	367	1,029	1·3
Bolton	227	1,021	1·0

LEA	Number of assisted pupils at school in area	Average expenditure per assisted pupil (£)	Assisted places expenditure as per cent. of LEA secondary budget†
Bury	206	794	1·0
Manchester	436	1,239	1·3
Oldham	181	1,050	1·0
Rochdale	Nil	Nil	Nil
Salford	Nil	Nil	Nil
Stockport	181	1,143	0·8
Tameside	Nil	Nil	Nil
Trafford	75	1,092	0·4
Wigan	Nil	Nil	Nil
Barnsley	Nil	Nil	Nil
Doncaster	Nil	Nil	Nil
Rotherham	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sheffield	57	1,017	0·1
Bradford	117	1,111	0·3
Calderdale	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kirklees	120	908	0·3
Leeds	249	1,224	0·4
Wakefield	140	1,241	0·6
Gateshead	Nil	Nil	Nil
Newcastle upon Tyne	410	1,087	1·7
North Tyneside	Nil	Nil	Nil
South Tyneside	Nil	Nil	Nil
Sunderland	Nil	Nil	Nil
Isles of Scilly	Nil	Nil	Nil
Avon	694	1,284	1·2
Bedfordshire	265	2,228	1·0
Berkshire	125	1,476	0·3
Buckinghamshire	6	2,240	0·03
Cambridgeshire	166	1,443	0·5
Cheshire	187	*1,202	*0·3
Cleveland	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cornwall	91	1,380	0·4
Cumbria	77	2,059	0·4
Derbyshire	104	2,092	0·3
Devon	304	1,369	0·6
Dorset	97	1,550	0·3
Durham	Nil	Nil	Nil
East Sussex	143	1,450	0·5
Essex	174	1,847	0·2
Gloucestershire	28	2,289	0·2
Hampshire	575	1,316	0·7
Hereford and Worcester	247	1,554	0·6
Hertfordshire	400	1,414	0·7
Humberside	138	1,164	0·2
Isle of Wight	Nil	Nil	Nil
Kent	159	1,665	0·2
Lancashire	425	1,156	0·4
Leicestershire	130	1,310	0·2
Lincolnshire	73	1,222	0·2
Norfolk	159	1,235	0·4
North Yorkshire	52	1,857	0·2
Northamptonshire	147	1,388	0·4
Northumberland	Nil	Nil	Nil
Nottinghamshire	98	977	0·1
Oxfordshire	240	1,467	0·7
Salop	41	1,150	0·1
Somerset	271	1,534	1·2
Staffordshire	262	1,442	0·4
Suffolk	217	1,331	0·5
Surrey	382	1,619	1·0
Warwickshire	153	1,071	0·5
West Sussex	Nil	Nil	Nil
Wiltshire	30	1,991	0·1

* Estimated
† institutional expenditure for the financial year 1983-84

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* those schools participating in the assisted places scheme where pupils on the scheme make up *(a)* 20 to 30 per cent., *(b)* 31 to 40 per cent., *(c)* 41 to 50 per cent. and *(d)* over 50 per cent. at the latest available date.

Mr. Dunn: The information requested for the school year 1984-85 is as follows:

(a) Batley Grammar School
Birkenhead School
Bolton School (Girls)

Brighton and Hove High School for Girls
Bristol Cathedral School
Bristol Grammar School
Carmel College, Wallingford
Central Newcastle High School for Girls
Colfes School, London
Dame Allan's Boys School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Edgehill College, Bideford
Emanuel School, London
Farnborough Hill School
Hereford Cathedral School
Hulme Grammar School for Girls, Oldham
Ipswich High School for Girls
King Edward's School, Birmingham
King Edward VI High School, Birmingham
King Edward VII School, Lytham
La Sagesse Convent School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Latymer Upper School, London
Maynard School, Exeter
Newcastle Under Lyme School, Staffordshire
Northampton High School for Girls
Norwich High School for Girls
Old Palace School, Croydon
Portsmouth High School for Girls
Queen Elizabeth Hospital School, Bristol
Red Maids School, Bristol
St. John's College, Southsea
St. Mary's College, Crosby
Ursuline High School, Ilford
Wisbech Grammar School
Wolverhampton Grammar School

(b) St. Edward's College, Liverpool
Streatham Hill and Clapham High School for Girls

(c) None

(d) None

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the average percentage fee increase for schools participating in the assisted places scheme for 1985-86.

Mr. Dunn: The figure is 7·4 per cent. over the year to September 1985.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools participating in the assisted places scheme have been given dispensation from the 60 per cent. requirement for admissions in the academic year 1985-86.

Mr. Dunn: Four.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many places on the assisted places scheme remain unfilled in 1985-86; how many of the filled places represent cases where the 60 per cent. requirement has been relaxed in each case for the age groups *(a)* 11 to 15 years and *(b)* 16 to 18 years; and what proportion of the total assisted places each figure represents.

Mr. Dunn: Of the 25,193 assisted places available to September 1985, 3,811 were unfilled. Relaxations of the 60 per cent. requirement have resulted in 178 additional filled places, representing 0·7 per cent. of the total places available. A breakdown by age group is not possible.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the work currently being done in his Department in respect of education vouchers, the expansion of the assisted places scheme and the reintroduction of direct grant schools or status; and what proportion of the education budget is involved in such proposals.

Sir Keith Joseph: Such questions arise from time to time as part of the Department's work in considering various possibilities for improving school education. No meaningful apportionment of administrative costs can be made

Overseas Students

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students from *(a)* overseas and *(b)* the United States of America are currently studying in British universities and polytechnics (i) in total and (ii) by institutions; and what were the comparable figures for 1979, expressed in figures and as a percentage of all students.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of British university undergraduate and postgraduate places are filled by students from *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* overseas.

Mr. Walden: In December 1984 the percentages of undergraduates and postgraduates from the United States of America and from all overseas countries studying at British universities were:

	Percentage of students from	
	the USA	*all overseas countries*
Postgraduates	2	36
Undergraduates	1	7

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students from the People's Republic of China are presently studying in the United Kingdom; under what auspices they are here; and how many there are in each basic field of study.

Mr. Walden: In 1984-85, the latest year for which figures are available, the numbers of students from the People's Republic of China studying at universities or public sector institutions in Great Britain were:

	Numbers
Postgraduate students	341
University undergraduate level and first degree students in public sector institutions	43
Other public sector higher education students	6
Non-advanced further education students	20
Total	410

Figures for students in private institutions, for Northern Ireland, and for subject of study are not readily available.

About 95 per cent. of these students received support from schemes of assistance funded by the United Kingdom Government as follows:

	Numbers
Technical Co-operation Training Programme	194
FCO Scholarships and Awards Scheme	34
Overseas Research Students Awards Scheme	133

	Numbers
British Council Fellowships	28
Total	389

Further information on student's sponsorship or source of support is not available.

Secondary Reorganisation

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report* all the proposals currently before him from local education authorities for secondary school reorganisation, stating the schools involved and the local education authority and the date at which his Department received the proposals.

Mr. Dunn: The table shows all proposals under sections 12 to 15 of the Education Act 1980 affecting the secondary schools which fell to be decided by my right hon. Friend at the end of January. Proposals are received by my right hon. Friend immediately following their publication, after which a period of two months follows in which objections to the proposals may be made.

Secondary reorganisation proposals undecided at 31 January 1986

Date published	LEA	Description of proposal including school names
22 April 1985	Bury	Closure of Peel VIth Form College; stand VIth Form College and Bury College of FE plus establishment of new Tertiary College.
28 September 1985	Rochdale	Reorganisation of RC provision in Rochdale. Close Bishop Henshaw Memorial RC Upper, St. Wilfrid's RC Middle, St. Joseph's RC Middle. Establish new RC Secondary. Amalgamate Cardinal Langley RC High and St. Dominic Savio RC High.
19 September 1985	Oldham	Reorganisation of RC Secondary provision. Close our Lady's RC Secondary, St. Alban's RC Secondary, St. Anselms RC Secondary plus establishment of 2 mixed RC Secondary Schools.
6 December 1985	Trafford	Reorganisation of secondary Schools. Close St. Mary's RC Secondary, for Boys, Cardinal Vaughan RC Secondary for Girls, St. Paul's Secondary, plus, establish new RC Mixed School.
13 December 1985	Trafford	Close Sale West County Secondary, Altrincham County Grammar for Boys, Altrincham County Grammar for Girls plus establish new Mixed Grammar School.
31 May 1985	Manchester	Closure of Margaret Ashton VIth Form College plus the establishment of a Tertiary College.
31 May 1985	Manchester	Closure of Arden VIth Form College plus the establishment of a Tertiary College.
6 September 1985	Bury	Amalgamation of St. Joseph's RC High and St. Peter's RC High Schools.
26 September 1985	Salford	Amalgamation of Cathedral RC High and St. Lawrence's RC High Schools.
6 September 1985	Lancs	Amalgamation of Castle Secondary and Greaves Secondary Schools.
6 December 1985	St Helens	Amalgamation of Cowley High and Rivington High Schools.
13 December 1985	Trafford	Amalgamation of Sale Grammar for Boys and Sale Grammar for Girls.
13 December 1985	Trafford	Amalgamation of Wellington Secondary for Boys and Wellington Secondary for Girls.
13 December 1985	Trafford	Closure of Great Stone Secondary for Boys, Gorse Park Secondary for Girls, Lostock Secondary Schools plus establishment of new Mixed Secondary School.
19 April 1985	Cumbria	Change Age range to 11-16 at Harraby Comp., Morton Comp. and St. Aidan's Comp. Schools.
19 April 1985	Cumbria	Change Age range to 11-16 at Newman RC Comp. and Trinity Comp. plus establishment of new sixth form college.
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Amalgamation of Broadway Secondary and Thorney Secondary School.
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Change Age range to 11-16 at Bede Secondary, Ryhope Secondary, Farringdon Secondary, Pennywell Secondary, Southmoor Secondary, Thornhill Secondary Schools.
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Close Shiney Row Secondary, Bernard Gilpin Secondary, Houghton Secondary Schools. Change Age range to 11-16 at Oxclose Secondary, Usworth Secondary, Washington Secondary, Biddick Secondary Schools plus establish 2 schools and close Sancroft Secondary School.
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Change Age range to 11-16 at Hylton Red House Secondary and Monkwearmouth Secondary Schools plus establishment of Tertiary College.
30 September 1985	Sunderland	Reduce intake at Hylton Red House, Monkwearmouth and Sancroft Secondary Schools.
24 October 1985	Sheffield	Reduce intake at Abbeydale Grange, Bradfield Chaucer, City, Ecclesfield, Firth Park, Gleadless Valley, Hindle House, King Ecgbert Myers Grove, Newfield, Norfolk, Stocksbridge, Waltheof and Westfield Secondary Schools.

Date published	LEA	Description of proposal including school names
6 June 1985	Kirklees	Close Heckmondwicke Grammar, Heckmondwicke Secondary and Liversedge Secondary Schools plus establish new County comprehensive.
24 October 1985	Sheffield	Sheffield reorganisation. Close Ashleigh, Beaver Hill, Brooke, Colley, High Storrs, Hurfield, Jordanthorpe, King Edward VII, Rowlinson, Silverdale, and Tapton Secondary Schools. Change age range at Abbeydale, Bradfield, Carter, Chaucer, City, Earl Marshall, Ecclesfield, Firth Park, Gleadless Valley, Hermies, Hindehouse, King Ecgbert, Myers Grove, Newfield, Norfolk, Park House, Stocksbridge, Thornbridge, Waltheof, Westfield, Wisewood, and Yewlands Secondary Schools, plus establish five secondary schools and eight Tertiary Colleges.
14 October 1985	South Tyneside	Close Chuter Ede Comprehensive and Redweer Comprehensive. Change age range to 11 to 16 at Boldon Comprehensive, Harton Comprehensive, Hebburn Comprehensive, King John Comprehensive, and Springfield Comprehensive.
9 May 1985	Wakefield	Change age range at Pontefract Park High, Pontefract Kings High, Pontefract Carleton High, Castleford Airedale High, Castleford High and Knottingley High Schools.
3 May 1985	Dudley	Reduce intake at Dudley Secondary School.
3 May 1985	Dudley	Change age range at Coseby, Dormston, Ellowes Hall, The High Arcal Secondary Schools.
3 May 1985	Dudley	Change age range at Buckpool, Crestwood, Kingswinford, Pensnett, Summerhill, The Thorns Secondary Schools.
3 May 1985	Dudley	Change Age range at Hillcrest, Holly Hall, Mons Hill, Sir Gilbert Claughton, and the Blue Coat CE Secondary Schools. Plus close Dudley VC Secondary and establish a new County Secondary plus a new VC VIth form College.
14 June 1985	Birmingham	Closure of Archbishop Masterson RC Secondary School.
14 June 1985	Birmingham	Closure of Archbishop Williams RC Secondary School.
14 June 1985	Birmingham	Change Age range to 11-16 at Cardinal Wiseman Secondary School.
14 June 1985	Birmingham	Enlargement of St. Thomas Aquinas RC Secondary.
14 June 1986	Birmingham	Change Age range to 11-16 at Bishop Challoner RC Secondary School.
14 June 1985	Birmingham	Change Age range to 11-16 at St. John Wall RC Secondary School.
21 June 1985	Coventry	Closure of Binley Park Comprehensive.
21 June 1985	Coventry	Change sex to co-ed-Caludan Castle Boys Comprehensive.
21 June 1985	Coventry	Reduce intake at Lyng Hall Girls Comprehensive.
21 January 1985	Lincs	Closure of Skegness Lumley, Skegness Morris, and Wainfleet Magdalene Secondary Schools plus establishment of a new Secondary Modern School.
28 June.85	Herts	Amalgamation of St. Angela's RC Secondary and St Michael's RC Secondary Schools.
14 December 1984	Bucks	Change Age range to 12-17 at Brenchwood, Cressex, Great Marlow, Hatters Lane, Princes Risborough, Sir William Ramsey, and Holmer Green Secondary Schools.
14 December 1984	Bucks	Close Wellesbourne Secondary School.
14 December 1984	Buckinghamshire	Amalgamation of Pembroke, Flackwell Heath and Deyncourt Secondary Schools.
14 December 1984	Buckinghamshire	Change sex to co-ed and enlarge Sir William Borlase's Secondary School.
8 February 1985	Kent	Close Gordon High School.
8 February 1985	Kent	Close Northfleet Grammar School.
13 December 1985	Berkshire	Amalgamation of Woodside Secondary Modern and Orchard Secondary Modern School.
30 November 1984	Gloucestershire	Gloucester City Secondary Reorganisation. Closure of Longlevers, Hucclecote, Saintbridge, Linden Culwell Grammar School for Girls, Ribston Hall Grammar, Sir Thomas Rich's Grammar, Crypt Grammar, Denmark Road for Girls Grammar, Oxstalls and Winifred Cullis Secondary Schools. Change Age range to 11 to 16 at Beaufort Secondary School and establish five new comprehensive schools.
16 November 1984	Dorset	Close Sherborne Lord Digby's Grammar and Sherborne Foster's Grammar Schools. Plus change Age range to 11 to 18 at Sherborne and St. Aldhelm's Secondary School.

Date published	LEA	Description of proposal including school names
15 November 1984	Gloucestershire	Stroud Secondary Reorganisation. Closure of Severn Vale, Manor Highwood, Marling Grammar, Stroud Girls High (Grammar). Establish three new Comprehensives. Change Age range to 11 to 16 at Archway and Maidenhill Secondary Schools, plus establish a County College.
10 September 1984	Avon	Close Beecham Cliff for Boys. Change Age range to 11 to 16 at Oldfield for Girls, Culverham for Boys, Hayesfield for Girls, Oldfield, Ralph Aver, and St. Mark's CE Secondary School.
19 March 1984	Devon	Closure of Barne Barton, Burleigh, Burnington, Devonport, Ford, Honicknowle, Kings Tamerton, Penlee, St. Peter's CE, Tamar High, Whitleigh, Widney High, Schools. Establish 3 new County Comprehensives and 1 new CE Comprehensive
14 October 1985	Avon	Reduce intake at Priory, Worle, Ralph Allen, Hayesfield Girls, Culverham Boys, Beechen Cliff for Boys, Castle, The Ridings High. Whitefield Fishponds, Speedwell, St. George's and Broadoak Secondary Schools.
15 November 1985	Glos	Closure of Bourton Vale Secondary and Westwood's Grammar Schools plus establishment of a Comprehensive school.
17 January 1986	Dudley	Closure of Blue Coat CE and Dudley Secondary Schools plus establish a new CE Secondary and a new 6th form college.
20 January 1986	Havering	Amalgamation of Bedfords Park and Neave Secondary Schools.
14 December 1984	Bucks	Close Barthlomew Tipping Secondary School

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average length of time taken by his Department to reach a decision on proposals for secondary school reorganisations submitted by local education authorities over the last three years.

Mr. Dunn: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Governors

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what information he has as to the number of young people aged under 18 years who currently have full governor status on the governing body of educational institutions;

(2) whether he will list in the *Official Report* those local education authorities where people under the age of 18 years are allowed to be full members of governing bodies of educational institutions, stating in each case the age at which membership is permitted.

Mr. Dunn: This information is not collected by the Department.

Direct Grant Schools

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he has any plans to reintroduce direct grant schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Government are considering whether there is scope for a new kind of experimental direct grant school, but is still some way from decisions on this.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (United States Manufacturing Clause)

Mr. Dorrell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what retaliatory measures he will recommend to his European Economic Community counterparts if the United States manufacturing clause is not allowed to lapse on 1 July.

Mr. Alan Clark: The manufacturing clause, as S601 of the United States Copyright Act 1970 is widely known, in effect prevents the importation into the United States of copyrighted non-dramatic material written in English by United States nationals but printed outside the United States and Canada. In 1984 a GATT panel found that this was a breach of United States international obligations. This finding was unanimously endorsed by GATT members. There is no doubt that the clause seriously hinders the ability of the printing industry in the United Kingdom and in other countries to export to the United States. Preliminary estimates of the trade loss caused to the European Community range between $300 million and $500 million.

Although the clause is due to expire at the end of June, there are proposals before Congress which would re-enact it. The Community has made it clear to the United States that it will be forced to seek GATT authority to take retaliatory action against imports from the United States if a renewal Bill is enacted. The Community is considering this week a formal request to GATT for authority to retaliate in the event of renewal and is examining the scope and detail of possible retaliation measures. Products that will be under consideration include products from the United States paper and tobacco manufacturing industries and certain printed matter.

United States Export Regulations

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to seek to relieve ICL plc of the United States re-export licence requirement imposed on that company's exports of computers from the United Kingdom by the United States Government in 1982.

Mr. Pattie: ICL raised various points arising from the extra-territorial nature of United States export controls with officials of this Department in 1982. United Kingdom officials took these up with the United States authorities as appropriate.

Copyright

Mr. Squire asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will detail the organisations and individuals who contributed an overall view against the Government's Green Paper on copyright.

Mr. Pattie: The Green Paper "The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material" (Cmnd. 9445), published in February 1985, proposed the introduction of a levy on blank recording tape. As more than 1,000 responses were received, the details requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, those opposed to a levy included organisations representing consumers, blind people and tape manufacturers, along with a majority of individual respondents.

Vehicles (Consumer Protection)

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will introduce legislation to offer statutory protection, similar to that afforded by the Hire Purchase Act 1964, to members of the public who purchase, in good faith, vehicles which are subject to leasing arrangements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have no plans to introduce legislation on these lines. However, the study by Professor Diamond of the law of security over movable property, which I announced in December, will look at all types of security interests in movable property, including those arising from leasing.

Hall Russell Shipbuilders

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of bids lodged on Friday 21 February for Hall Russell Shipbuilders, Aberdeen; what were the names of the bidders; and if he will make a statement on the successful bidder.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Telephone Network (Pornography)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations he has received about the use of the public telephone network for transmission of pornographic material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: I have received one representation from an hon. Member on behalf of one of his constituents. Section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 prohibits the sending, by means of a public telecommunications system, of any message or matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether nuclear waste dumps established by NIREX would be eligible for regional aid if located in the appropriate areas.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1986, c. *495*]: The Regional Development Grant (Qualifying Activities) Order 1984 (S.I. 1846) specifically excludes disposal of nuclear waste. Such projects are also very unlikely to qualify for regional selective assistance.

SCOTLAND

Lochaber

14. **Sir Russell Johnston** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to visit Lochaber.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans in the immediate future to visit Lochaber.

Rating (Single Householders)

15. **Sir Hector Monro** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has made an assessment of the number of single householders who will benefit by his new rating proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: While the proportion will vary from area to area, and I do not have detailed figures, I would expect that over 80 per cent. of all single householders in Scotland would benefit and among them over 85 per cent. of single pensioners.

Teachers' Dispute

16. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet officials of the Educational Institute of Scotland to discuss the current teachers' dispute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang). My right hon. and learned Friend and I are always willing to meet with any of the teachers' unions, although there are no plans to do so at present.

31. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current situation on the teachers' dispute.

34. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement about the teachers' dispute.

38. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the latest position of the teachers' dispute.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer to the answer given earlier today by my right hon. and learned Friend to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, East (Mr. Strang).

Enterprise Zones

17. **Mr. Ernie Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the performance and administration of the enterprise zones in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Industry Department for Scotland monitors closely the performance of Scotland's three enterprise zones and I am pleased with the progress made there. Clydebank is one of the United Kingdom's most successful zones and one of the largest in employment terms, with 3,000 jobs created since designation. The Invergordon and Tayside zones have been in operation for a shorter period than Clydebank, but

good progress has already been made. The administration of individual enterprise zone schemes is the responsibility of the respective zone authorities.

Economic Activity

19. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current level of economic activity in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Scotland is continuing to share in the growth of the United Kingdom economy. The latest output statistics show that industrial production and construction was 4·5 per cent. higher in the first half of 1985 than a year earlier, and manufacturing output alone was 6 per cent. higher. Although there were signs of slower manufacturing growth in the second half of last year, the latest CBI and Scottish business surveys reported that manufacturers were expecting rising orders and output in the period ahead.

Whisky Industry

20. **Mr. Pollock** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he plans to meet members of the Scotch Whisky Association to discuss the current state of the industry in Scotland as it affects his responsibilities regarding employment and economic matters in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I have made arrangements to have a discussion with the association's director general in the very near future.

Scottish Development Agency

21. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will allocate additional resources to the Scottish Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The agency's gross provision across its range of functions for 1986-87 is expected to be in the region of £136 million which is more than £8 million in excess of its equivalent provision for 1985-86 and £18 million higher than the agency spent in 1984-85. This is a sizeable budget and one which reflects the Government's commitment to the agency's tasks of assisting economic development and evironmental improvement in Scotland.

Health Boards (Houses)

22. **Mr. Hugh Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many houses were owned by health boards in 1980; how many have been sold to the nearest convenient date; what have been the average discounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Approximately 2,750; 174 surplus to requirements had been sold by 14 February 1986. The average discount in sales to sitting tenants has been approximately 40 per cent. It remains the Government's policy that boards should offer for sale all staff houses which are not essential to the provision of health care.

Afforestation

23. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received concerning the widespread afforestation in Caithness.

Mr. John MacKay: Representations have been received from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). In addition, nine members of the public have made representations either directly or through their Member of Parliament.

32. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had, or plans to have, with the Countryside Commission for Scotland, regarding its recent draft report on forestry policy.

Mr. John MacKay: It would not be appropriate for my right hon. and learned Friend to consult the Countryside Commission for Scotland at this stage on its report, since this is still in draft form and has not been formally drawn to his attention by it.

35. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is his intention to introduce planning controls over forestry.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend is not considering the introduction of planning controls over forestry.

37. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the Forestry Commission to discuss broadleaf woodland policy.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans at present to meet the Forestry Commission to discuss this subject. However, as was made clear in the Government's statement of 24 July 1985 on broadleaves policy, we have asked the Forestry Commission to report regularly on the operation and effectiveness of the new measures and we shall be reviewing them after some three years.

"Paying for Local Government"

24. **Mr. Henderson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the response by people in Scotland to the publication of the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Ancram: I have been extremely gratified by the welcome accorded in Scotland to the proposals for reform contained in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government". In the last four weeks, they have been the subject of much public debate both in the columns of the press and on the broadcasting media. I have already received the views of a number of people, and I hope that others—including the Scottish local authorities—will take the opportunity to make constructive comments before the consultation period ends on 31 July.

Scottish Development Agency

25. **Mr. Ewing** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the inquiry he has set up into the performance of the Scottish Development Agency.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The review of the Scottish Development Agency which is now under way is part of the national review programme covering all non-departmental public bodies. The SDA's programmes play a key role in our policies for developing the Scottish economy and improving the environment and I have every

confidence that the review will help to ensure that we continue to get the best possible value for money from this expenditure.

Rural Aid Fund

26. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what response he has now made to the representations of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities concerning the need for a rural aid fund.

Mr. Rifkind: I refer the right hon. Lady to my reply to her on 27 January, at column *371*.

Student Grant

27. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received following his recent announcement of a 2 per cent. increase in grants to students in higher education establishments in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: Since 16 December 1985 I have received representations about the student grant settlement for 1986-87 in the form of letters or petitions on behalf of about 1,200 students.

Labour Statistics

28. **Mr. Millan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest figures for Scottish unemployment.

Mr. Rifkind: On 9 January 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in Scotland was 371,117. While this was an increase of 17,868 over the preceding month, the seasonally adjusted figure fell by 500. The problem of continued high unemployment is one of my major concerns. A necessary prerequisite to its resolution is continued growth in the economy. The Government's economic policy is designed to achieve this and is succeeding.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many jobs are estimated by his Department to be available in Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In January of this year there were 223 notified unfilled vacancies in Greenock.

Drunken Driving

29. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the final assessment of the statistics for drunken driving offences over the Christmas and new year period.

Mr. Ancram: Of 1,428 breath tests taken during the Christmas and new year period, 243 were positive. This compares with 230 positive from 415 tests in 1984-85.

Drunken driving does not occur only during the festive season, and the police have made it clear that they will enforce the law equally rigorously throughout the year.

Electronics and Computer Industry

30. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about redundancies in the electronics and computer industries in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The pace of technological change in the electronics industry inevitably means that some companies will be forced to shed labour as products and processes become outdated while others will increase their employment as new products are developed. This, coupled with the effects of acute world recession in the markets for certain electronics products, notably semiconductors and integrated circuits, has resulted in a higher level of job losses in 1985 than in the past. There are signs, however, that markets are beginning to recover and the medium to longer term prospect is for further growth in the electronics industry in Scotland.

Highlands and Islands (Employment)

33. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the employment opportunities within the highlands and islands.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Prospects inevitably vary from one area to another but for most parts of the Highlands and Islands the outlook is for greater employment stability than in the recent past.

Coats Patons Ltd.

36. **Mr. Allan Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what assurances about future employment were sought by and given to his Department's officials by Coats Patons Limited in connection with Government assistance for its recent merger with Viyella.

Mr. Allan Stewart: No Government financial assistance has been given to Coats Patons plc in connection with its proposed merger with Vantona Viyella plc. Discussions between departmental officials and companies in merger cases are treated as commercially confidential.

National Union of Mineworkers

39. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the reply he sent to the Scottish area of the National Union of Mineworkers on its request for a meeting with him.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have arranged for a copy of the reply dated 7 February to be placed in the Library.

Crofters (Fencing Grants)

40. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will restore fencing only grants for crofters.

Mr. Rifkind: Provided there is agricultural justification for the work, grant assistance for fencing, unaccompanied by other works, is available throughout the crofting areas under the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme at the rate of 55 per cent. of the eligible cost.

Cancer Research (Damon Biotech)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much public money has been paid or promised by the Scottish Office to Damon Biotech for cancer research in the past year; and what proportion of total United Kingdom funding for cancer research this represents.

Mr. John MacKay: No public funds have been offered to Damon Biotech specifically for cancer research. The Government have made an offer of funds to Damon Biotech for research and development into certain process

technologies which may have a number of health care applications including the diagnosis and treatment of cancer.

Soil Research Stations

Mr. McQuarrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will complete the review of the soil research stations in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: I refer my hon. Friend to my answer on 13 February to his written question about the proposed transfer of the Macauley Institute for Soil Research from Aberdeen.

White Fronted Geese

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many white fronted geese have wintered on Islay in each of the last three years.

Mr. Rifkind: The Nature Conservancy Council carries out a census of white fronted geese twice yearly in the autumn and spring. Its figures for Islay are as follows:

		Number
Autumn	1982	3,501
Spring	1983	3,441
Autumn	1983	4,592
Spring	1984	4,198
Autumn	1984	5,256
Spring	1985	4,715
Autumn	1985	6,200

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to review the present annuality system of capital expenditure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have no plans for any major changes to the system for controlling local authority capital expenditure. The present arrangements modify strict annuality, permitting authorities to enter into commitments for future years and allowing them a considerable measure of end-year flexibility. For non-housing expenditure I issue final allocations for the immediately following year together with provisional allocations for the two years thereafter. In addition, authorities may carry forward up to ten per cent. of any underspend, and anticipate up to ten per cent. from the following year as well as being allowed to transfer up to ten per cent. between programmes. In the case of housing expenditure when issuing final allocations for a particular year, I indicate that authorities may enter into commitments in year 2 provided they do not exceed a proportion, at present seventy per cent., of their allocation for year.

Furthermore, from 1 April authorities will be free to carry forward up to three and a half per cent. of any housing underspend into the following year and this may be increased to ten per cent. at my discretion. They may also vire between the HRA and non-HRA block.

Food Premises (Registration)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will act to introduce mandatory registration of all food premises with the environmental health authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am considering this question along with the allied question of prior approval of food businesses in the context of the responses to the consultation paper on the review of food legislation.

Milk

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will seek powers to require that milk supplied to persons living and working on farms is pasteurised.

Mr. Rifkind: No. Such a requirement would be impossible to enforce. The only effective way of curtailing on-farm consumption of untreated milk is by convincing the dairy farmer and his workers of the increased health risks associated with consumption of untreated milk.

Housing

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will raise the tolerable standard for Scottish housing in line with the recommendations in his Department's Green Paper.

Mr. Rifkind: The Green Paper "Home Improvements in Scotland — A New Approach" — Cmnd. 9677 — published in December 1985, outlines our proposals for changes to the present improvement grant scheme and views have been invited from interested organisations. The consultation period expires on 7 March 1986.

Any proposed change to the Scottish tolerable standard would require to be considered in the light of the comments received and would require legislation.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what grants have been allocated by his Department to the Inverclyde district council in each of the past five years for housing improvement projects; and what spending constraints have been imposed on Inverclyde district council during the past five years.

Mr. Ancram: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if his Department will fund a survey of the condition of housing in Scotland similar to those funded for England in 1981 and 1985 by the Department of the Environment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I am prepared to consider a national house condition survey, but only if I can be persuaded that the results would add significantly to the information that is already available to me and thereby justify the very considerable cost and effort involved. I have yet to be convinced of the validity of that argument.

A national survey with a sample size and structure parallel to that of the 1981 English survey would not yield the level and detail of information required in Scotland. Better use can be made of the available funds by undertaking work on the stock and by targeting surveys to specific areas of the stock where problems have been identified.

I do not believe that a Scottish inquiry, parallel to that carried out in 1985 by the Department of the Environment,

is necessary. I already have detailed assessments of the repair and modernisation needs of the local authority stock submitted by local authorities in the form of housing plans and check lists. This year, local authorities have been given consent to spend on their own stock over £50 million more than in the previous year.

Plant Breeding

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the cost of plant breeding rights and national list testing in Scotland; and if he will distinguish therein between administrative and operational cost.

Mr. John MacKay: The estimated expenditure to be incurred in Scotland in the financial year 1985-86 is approximately £190,000 for plant breeders' rights testing including administrative expenditure and VAT charges amounting together to some £40,000. For national list testing the figure is approximately £570,000, including administrative expenditure of £10,000.

Expenditure incurred in testing for plant breeders' rights is recovered from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

ASH (Grant-in-Aid)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Scottish Office has given grant-in-aid to Action on Smoking and Health; and if any donations have been given in the past four years.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish Committee of Action on Smoking and Health has received an annual grant-in-aid from the Scottish Home and Health Department for the past 10 years. Over the past five years the amount of the annual grant from the Department has been as follows:

Financial year	£
1980-81	11,000
1981-82	15,400
1982-83	20,500
1983-84	22,000
1984-85	22,990

Examinations (Markers)

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state, with reference to markers recruited for Scottish Certificate of Education examinations, in what exceptional circumstances a marker will be excused attendance at a meeting on a Saturday to discuss policy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish Examination Board has informed me that it will consider waiving the normal requirement of compulsory attendance at markers' meetings arranged for a Saturday where the marker has a previous specific and unbreakable commitment on the date fixed for the meeting. In any event, every marker receives written instructions and, where a marker is unable to attend a meeting, these are supplemented as required.

Mr. Campbell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the cost in 1985 for advertising for and recruiting markers for the Scottish Certificate of Education examinations *(a)* in Scotland, *(b)* in other areas of the United Kingdom and *(c)* elsewhere.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have asked the Scottish Examination Board to write to the Member with this information as soon as possible.

Forth Road Bridge

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the chairman of the Forth road bridge joint board to discuss the state of the carriageways of the bridge on Friday 21 February and to seek assurances that gritting and other anti-skid measures will be taken during inclement weather; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I regret, as I am sure does the Forth Road Bridge Joint Board, the inconvenience caused to bridge users on Friday 21 February. I understand that it was due to wholly unsual circumstances which obstructed the board's normally efficient clearing and gritting arrangements. However, the management of the bridge is entirely a matter for the Forth Road Bridge Joint Board which will, I am sure, take note of the hon. Gentleman's views.

Education (Standard and Higher Grades)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has yet received representations from the Scottish Examination Board and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the proposals he announced on Tuesday 21 January concerning the implementation of standard grade and the revision of higher grade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and the Scottish Examination Board have now accepted the proposals I announced on Tuesday 21 January 1986—Vol. 90, Col. 101—in reply to my hon. Friend and have agreed that standard grade and the consequential revision of higher grade should be implemented on that basis. I have now therefore asked the Scottish Examination Board to proceed accordingly.

THE ARTS

Capital Transfer Tax

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he will list the objects and property accepted in satisfaction of capital transfer tax since the answer of 2 April 1985, *Official Report*, columns 577-8; and if, in listing them, he will specify *(a)* the amount of tax satified in each case, *(b)* whether any offer of objects carried conditions as to destination, *(c)* the dates in each case of the recommendations received by him from the Museums and Galleries Commission for acceptance of objects and *(d)* the total of tax thus satisfied; and whether a press notice will be issued from the Office of Arts and Libraries covering the information given in his reply.

Mr. Luce: Since the answer of 2 April 1985, the Government have accepted the following items in lieu of tax:

Work of art/land	*Condition as to allocation*	*Date recommended by MGC*
Photographs associated with the late Marquess Curzon of Kedleston	India Office and Records (British Library)	30.3.84

Work of art/land	Condition as to allocation	Date recommended by MGC
Chattels at Mount Edgcumbe	*In situ*	9.5.85
Collar chain of a KCMG	—	30.8.85
Land at Pond Wood	—	N/A
Chattels at Hagley Hall	*In situ*	20.12.85
Land at Coldharbour Common	—	N/A

The total amount of tax satisfied is £505,650. The amount of tax satisfied in individual cases is confidential.

In addition, I have corresponded with the chairman of the Museums and Galleries Commission about a number of other cases, in the majority of which ownership has not yet been transferred formally to the Government. It is therefore not appropriate to give details of these at present. However, I hope to be in a position to make a further announcement shortly, and to issue a press notice including the above information.

Export of Works of Art

Mr. Faulds asked the Minister for the Arts whether he has received from the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art its report for the year ended 30 June 1985; and whether he anticipates its publication within the time span indicated in the answer of 23 July 1985, *Official Report*, column 449.

Mr. Luce: No. As my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) explained to the hon. Member on 23 July 1985, the aim is to publish the reports of the reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art as soon a possible after the end of the period covered. Exceptionally heavy caseloads in two consecutive years resulted in delay in the publication of the 1983-84 report. Publication of the 1984-85 report has similarly been delayed by the heavy caseloads this year. It is hoped that the report will be published no later than June 1986.

CIVIL SERVICE

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of YTS places by Government Department made available within those Departments on the latest convenient date for which figures are available.

Mr. Luce: On 1 November 1985 the number of approved places on the youth training scheme in Government Departments was as follows:

	Places
Ministry of Defence	875
Departments of the Environment and Transport	30
Home Office	5
Inland Revenue	12
Ordnance Survey	25
Property Services Agency	30
Scottish Office	30
Department of Trade and Industry	39

Places were also available in some non-departmental public bodies.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Inflation

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish a table setting out the information he has on the comparative annualised rates of inflation for *(a)* France, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan, *(d)* West Germany and *(e)* the United Kingdom in (i) October 1974, (ii) May 1979, *(c)* June 1983 and *(d)* the most recent available date.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The 12-month increases in consumer price indices are given in the following table.

per cent.

	October 1974	May 1979	June 1983	December 1985
France	14·9	9·7	8·9	4·7
USA	12·2	10·8	2·6	3·8
Japan	26·2	3·1	2·0	1·8
West Germany	7·1	3·7	2·4	1·8
United Kingdom	17·1	10·3	3·7	5·7

Customs and Excise (Heathrow)

Mr. Corbett asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the establishment *(a)* requested by the staff side and *(b)* given for Customs and Excise officers by grade at London Heathrow Terminal 4.

Mr. Brooke: The local trade union side requested a total complement of 96, comprising eight higher executive officers, 64 executive officers and 24 clerical officers. The official side considers a total complement of 87, comprising seven higher executive officers, 62 executive officers and 18 clerical officers, appropriate to meet the demands of the work.

Budget Documents

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of the Budget documents were printed in 1985; how many were sent to the Vote Office; how many were made available to commercial organisations and at what charge for each; what happened to the remainder; what was the cost to the Exchequer of producing the Budget documents; and what was the total amount recovered from commercial organisations.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Departmental Purchasing Policy

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his Department's policy is on the purchases of goods and services; how he is monitoring its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office seeks value for money in its purchases of goods and services in accordance with Treasury guidelines and is currently implementing recommendations in the 1984 Cabinet Office report on Government purchasing. An

official in the management review staff is engaged full-time in co-ordinating and monitoring this work and reports to Ministers.

Caraballeda Declaration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recently signed Caraballeda declaration on peace and security in central America.

Mr. Eggar: As my right hon. and learned Friend told the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) on 5 February, at column 267, we and our Community partners have publicly welcomed the impetus given to the Contadora negotiations by the Caraballeda declaration and its endorsement by the central American Foreign Ministers in Guatemala city on 14 January.

Occupied Countries

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries, or parts of countries, which Her Majesty's Government perceive as *de facto* occupied.

Mr. Eggar: The international disputes and conflicts which exist around the world vary widely in their nature and are often complicated; it is not therefore practicable to prepare a list of countries, or parts of countries, by reference to a criterion of *de facto* occupation.

Western European Union

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a Government report on each plenary part session of the Assembly of the Western European Union to be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Eggar: I do not think it would be appropriate for us to report to the House on the meetings of the Assembly of the Western European Union, the British members of which are drawn from this House and from another place. Full records of the proceedings of the Western European Union Assembly are published by the Assembly itself and a copy is placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will arrange for a Government statement on the work of the Western European Union to be presented to Parliament annually.

Mr. Eggar: The annual reports of the Council of the Western European Union to the Assembly (on the Council activities for the period 1 January to 31 December of each year) are published. Copies are placed in the Library of the House. However, I would be happy to adopt the suggestion of my hon. Friend and would propose to make such a statement after the autumn Ministerial meeting of the Western European Union.

Council of Europe

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will arrange for a Government report on each plenary part session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to be laid before Parliament;

(2) if he will arrange for a Government statement on the work of the Council of Europe to be presented to Parliament annually.

Mr. Eggar: The reports of the debates in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, prepared by the Council Secretariat, and the reports to the Parliamentary Assembly by the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers give a full account of the work of the Council of Europe and are available in the Library of the House. There is no intention to make additional reports or statements.

TRANSPORT

Spare Wheels

Mr. Conlan asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the maximum speed, under normal conditions, at which the Transport Road and Research Laboratory tests on non-standard motor car spare wheels were found to be satisfactory.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Tests were conducted under extreme driving conditions at varying speeds to ascertain the car's handling performance. The maximum speed in normal driving conditions was not checked but the handling tests indicated that 50 mph would be safe.

Mr. Conlan asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information has been sent to him by the Automobile Association on the use of non-standard motor car spare wheels, and on the desirability of a handling test to ensure adequate safety.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have placed in the Library a copy of the AA's report on this subject dated April 1985. It contains arguments in favour of a handling test. It was not possible to get international agreement to such a test in the discussions leading up to the adoption of ECE regulation 64.

Mr. Conlan asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now commission an assessment by his Department into the benefits to motorists of the supply of non-standard motor car spare wheels by vehicle manufacturers.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. The Department is not responsible for advising consumers on possible costs and benefits associated with different models of car or car equipment.

DVLC

Mr. Porter asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in the light of the expected increase in computer capacity at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre, he will arrange for the issue of registration documents which include both name and address of the owner as well as the keeper of the vehicle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Computer capacity is not now a serious constraint for the inclusion of information about the owner as well as the keeper of a vehicle on the registration document. It would, however, be very difficult and expensive for my Department clearly to identify the legal owners of all vehicles. In addition such a system would make the process of licensing and registering a vehicle more complicated and time consuming for the ordinary motorist. Advice is shortly to

be issued to motorists by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre listing points to check in addition to the registration document when buying a used car.

Motorways (Lighting)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether there are any plans to light those stretches of motorway which pass over rivers or streams on the M25 which are currently unlit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have nothing more to add to my replies to my hon. Friend's questions on Tuesday 25 February, at column *502*.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many miles of the M42 are lit; how many miles are unlit; and how many miles are planned to be lit.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Currently 6 miles are lit, 32 miles are unlit and there are plans to light a further 2 miles.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of lighting *(a)* the remaining stages of all Britain's motorways, *(b)* the M25 and *(c)* the M1; and if he will publish the estimated maintenance charges and cost for each.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It would cost approximately £110 million, £9 million and £11 million to light the remaining unlit stages of motorways in England, the M25 and the M1 respectively. The related maintenance costs would be approximately £11 million, £0·9 million and £1·1 million respectively.

Costs are at 1985-86 prices.

M25 (Opening Dates)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the expected dates of completion by the contractors and for opening of the remaining sections of the M25 either side of the M1 interchange.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The contract completion dates for the four remaining contracts are:

Michlefield Green-A41-Bedmond Road: 5 October 1986
Bedmond Road-M1/A405 Interchange: 21 September 1986
A405-A6 (The Bell): 2 November 1986
A6 (The Bell)-A1 (South Mimms): 26 October 1986

There is a degree of interdependence between the contracts. They will be opened as soon as practicable after completion.

Heathrow Airport (Passenger Statistics)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the expected passenger throughput at London Heathrow terminal 4 each 24 hours; and what estimates he has made of future growth in passengers.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The passenger throughput at terminal 4 Heathrow in each 24-hour period will vary considerably throughout the year. The terminal has been designed to be able to handle 2,000 passengers per hour in each direction. On the pattern of traffic expected to use the terminal its annual capacity is about 8 million passengers. Initially, following the transfer to the terminal of British Airways' long-haul, Paris and Amsterdam services, and KLM's and Air Malta's services, BAA expects the annual passenger throughput to be about 6 million. The estimates of future growth in the number of passengers in the south-east were set out in the White Paper on airports policy (Cmnd. 9542) published in June 1985.

Tyres

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what procedure he plans for dealing with the responses received to his Department's consultative paper about the revised tread depth regulations; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make a statement on his policy towards the revised tyre tread depth regulations in the light of the evidence on the subject given by the Association of Chief Police Officers to the Transport Committee, a copy of which has been sent to him, and if will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yesterday I had a meeting with the organisations most involved in this subject. I shall make a statement as soon as I can.

M12 (Woodford-Brentwood)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will indicate a time scale for the building of the section of the M12 from Woodford to Brentwood.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As announced in "National Roads England 1985", the proposal for the M12 has been withdrawn from the national roads programme.

I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters his Department received between 1 January 1985 and 21 January 1986 from members of the public writing to object against the proposed construction of a Channel fixed link.

Mr. David Mitchell: 1,941 for the whole of the United Kingdom.

Flight DA 7045 (Radioactive Cargo)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the Civil Aviation Authority the route of flight DA 7045 from Liverpool to Dounreay on Thursday 20 February carrying radioactive fuel; whether the flight path was logged with and under the control of air traffic controllers at Dyce airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Flight routes are a matter for the aircraft operator and the National Air Traffic Services. NATS has informed me that flight DA 7045 flew from Liverpool to Dounreay in accordance with air traffic control requirements. Because the flight path passed outside the airspace controlled by air traffic controllers at Dyce airport, there was no requirement for the flight to be logged with it or under its control.

M25 (Resurfacing)

Mr. George Gardiner asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the approximate cost of replacing the present brushed concrete surface of the Reigate-Leatherhead section of the M25 with tarmacadam.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The approximate cost which allows for overlaying with 100 mm of bituminous

material, ancillary works and traffic management would be some £3 million at present-day prices. This does not include any assessment of traffic delay costs over the period of the works which would be several months.

There will be no significant noise difference from an asphalt surface with similar skid resistance characteristics.

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Jessel asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to commence consultations on the United Kingdom aircraft noise index study: main report (DR Report 8402); and what form he proposes these consultations should take.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have today inititated this consultation process.

Following criticism of the noise and number index, which has been used since 1963 as an index of aircraft noise disturbance, a full study was commissioned by the Department of Trade, which then had responsibility for civil aviation matters. The main aim of the study was either to substantiate the NNI or if necessary devise some better index.

The main conclusion reached by the authors of the study report, the directorate of research of the Civil Aviation Authority, is that there appears to be a case for replacing the NNI system of measurement by one based on the 24-hour Leq (equivalent continuous sound level) scale.

As indicated in the White Paper on "Airports Policy" (Cmnd. 9542), the Government are concerned that aircraft noise disturbance is monitored as accurately as possible, and by methods that fairly represent the level of annoyance experienced, and so command public confidence. I would, therefore, like those whom I am formally consulting, and others who may wish to play a part, to let me have their comments by the end of August. These comments will be carefully examined and will be taken into account in the development of future policy. A synopsis of the comments will be made generally available.

I have placed a copy of the study report in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Drugs (Review)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) when the Committee on Safety of Medicines will have completed its special review of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs; and if he will place a copy of the completed report when it is available in the Library;

(2) what is the nature of the close surveillance of the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs currently being carried out by the Committee on Safety of Medicines; who is undertaking the work; how it is being done; to what extent the manufacturing companies are involved; and what is the cost of the surveillance.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand that the committee, assisted by its medical and administrative secretariat, is carrying out a special scrutiny of the adverse reactions and product usage data and of professional literature reports on these products. The secretariat is in touch with manufacturing companies about usage data that might be available. It is not known at present when the review will be completed or how much it will cost, though I am advised that costs will be met from budgeted expenditure for Medicines Act activities. I understand that the committee intends to communicate with the profession in the light of its findings. Copies of material issued by the committee will be placed in the Library.

Life Expectancy

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* the expectation of life at age 16 years for men and women in each of the past 30 years.

Mr. Whitney: Expectations of life in England and Wales for each of the past 30 years are available for age 15 but not for age 16. The figures are given in the table.

England and Wales

Year	Expectation of life at age 15	
	Males	Females
1953	55·0	59·9
1954	55·1	60·2
1955	55·0	60·1
1956	55·2	60·3
1957	55·2	60·6
1958	55·2	60·6
1959	55·3	60·7
1960	55·5	61·0
1961	55·2	60·7
1962	55·2	60·8
1963	55·0	60·6
1964	55·6	61·5
1965	55·5	61·4
1966	55·4	61·3
1967	56·0	61·8
1968	55·6	61·4
1969	55·4	61·4
1970	55·7	61·6
1971	55·8	61·8
1972	55·7	61·7
1973	56·0	62·0
1974	56·2	62·1
1975	56·2	62·1
1976	56·4	62·3
1977	56·5	62·4
1978	56·6	62·6
1979	56·8	62·7
1980	57·0	63·0
1981	57·3	63·1
1982	57·5	63·3
1983	57·7	63·5

Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (Tests)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will look into the possibility of introducing automatic tests for familial hypercholesterolaemia as part of the treatment for patients suffering from heart complaints.

Mr. Whitney: All patients with familial hypercholesterolaemia would have a family history of this condition. It is for the clinicians responsible for their treatment to initiate whatever tests they considered appropriate.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are currently in receipt of mobility allowance; and how these figures compare with corresponding figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Newton: The information requested, as at February each year, is set out in the following table.

Mobility Allowance
Number of Recipients

Year	Number
1986	410,720
1985	359,150
1984	308,230
1983	259,880
1982	216,520
1981	187,410

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people received the mobility allowance in Reading in 1978 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the information is not available.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons are currently in receipt of attendance allowances *(a)* on the higher rate and *(b)* on the lower rate; and how these figures compare with corresponding figures for each of the past five years.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Attendance allowance—number of beneficiaries (estimated)

Year	(a) Higher rate (thousands)	(b) Lower rate (thousands)
*†1985	222	321
†1984	192	277
†1983	177	238
†1982	150	214
‡1981	147	204
‡1980	132	182

* latest available estimate.
† as at March.
‡ as at September.

Hospital and Community Health Service

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the most recent estimates for changes in hospital and community health service pay and prices and input volumes for 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: Hospital and community health services' pay and prices are expected to rise by 5·2 per cent. in 1985-86; this estimate will be revised when final information about pay and prices becomes available after the end of the financial year. The figure of 5·2 per cent. compares with the cash increase of 6 per cent. (after allowing for transfers from revenue to capital in 1984-85) provided for in 1985-86. The actual outturn will not be known for some time; a specific uncertainty attaches to the scale of possible tranfers between revenue and capital.

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the most recent estimates for components of the hospital and community health service programme budget for 1985-86.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's programme budget analysis is carried out retrospectively when the necessary activity and cost data become available. On the normal timetable the hospital and community health service programme budget will be compiled in the first quarter of next year.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures indicating the amount of Government grant given to agencies working to combat drug abuse for the years 1980 to 1985 inclusive.

Mr. Whitney: The amounts made available to statutory and voluntary organisations by the Department specifically to provide services for drug misusers for the financial years 1980-81—1985-86 are as follows:

	£
1980-81	285,690
1981-82	347,360
1982-83	433,174
1983-84	1,270,702
1984-85	2,386,542
1985-86	*3,602,276

*(Estimated)

In addition, £628,000 was spent in 1984-85 and £1,815,000 is expected to be spent in 1985-86 on the Department's drug misuse prevention campaign.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will provide figures indicating the amount spent by the Health Education Council on the prevention of alcohol abuse during the years 1980 to 1985 inclusive;

(2) if he will provide figures indicating the amount spent by the Health Education Council on the prevention of drug abuse during the years 1980 to 1985 inclusive.

Mr. Whitney: Expenditure has been as follows:

	Alcohol £	*Drugs* £
1979-80	24,842	—
1980-81	216,534	—
1981-82	194,683	—
1982-83	263,178	—
1983-84	310,671	—
1984-85	217,553	17,031

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures indicating the amount of Government grant given to agencies working to combat alcohol abuse for the years 1980 to 1985 inclusive.

Mr. Whitney: The amounts made available to statutory and voluntary organisations by the Department specifically to provide services for alcohol abusers for the financial years in question are as follows:

Year	£
1980-81	1,245,018
1981-82	920,000
1982-83	846,420
1983-84	828,900
1984-85	712,638
1985-86	*812,150

* Estimated figure.

In addition, a grant is made to the Health Education Council from which it undertakes preventive work.

Pensions

Sir Adam Butler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the amount by which the married couple and the single person currently drawing the full, appropriate state pension have changed their standard of living, measured by the percentage increase in pensions over the increase in retail prices, since May 1979.

Mr. Newton: At November 1985, when social security benefits were last increased, a pensioner couple receiving £61·30 had improved their standard of living by some 5 per cent. in real terms—about £3 a week—over the levels at November 1978, the last benefit increase prior to May 1979. A single pensioner receiving £38·30 is about 5·3 per cent.—or over £1·90 a week better off.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what would the single pension and married pension be if they had kept pace with the rise in average earnings since 1979; how this compares with the actual level of pensions in 1985-86 and 1986-87; and what would be the first-year and full-year costs of an increase in pension so as to restore the link with earnings *(a)* net of the cost of indexation and *(b)* net of the cost of indexation and savings on other benefits as a direct result of restoration of earnings-pension link;

(2) what would be the first-year and full-year cost of increases in the single and married pensions in 1985-86 and 1986-87 by £1, £5, £8 and £10 per week *(a)* inclusive of the cost of indexation, *(b)* net of the cost of indexation and *(c)* net of the cost of indexation and savings in other benefit payments as a direct result of these pension increases.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Chiropody

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many district health authorities provide chiropody services under the National Health Service free of charge to all women between the ages of 60 years and 65 years; and what are the average, longest and shortest, waiting times for chiropody treatment under the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that information is not collected centrally in the form requested. However, 41 district health authorities can be identified from statistical returns as providing chiropody services in the community to women aged 60-64 in 1984 and other authorities may also do so. Chiropody treatment is provided as necessary to hospital in-patients. Information on waiting times for chiropody is not collected centrally.

Hospitals (Costs)

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost of drugs dispensed at the Christie hospital, Manchester, and the Royal Marsden hospital, London, in the last 12 months; and what is the cost of drugs per patient.

Mr. Whitney: I regret we do not hold such detailed information centrally. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to direct his inquiries to the chairmen of the two health authorities involved.

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the cost per patient of treatment at Christie hospital, Manchester, and the Royal Marsden hospital, London, in the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: Costing returns for 1984-85 submitted by the two health authorities show the following:

	Cost per in patient day £	*Cost per in patient case* £
Christie Hospital, Manchester	76·73	657·11
Royal Marsden Hospital, London	138·45	1,181·51

RU 486 Abortive Drug

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement as to the approval, use, supply and circumstances of distribution in the United Kingdom of RU 486 abortive drug manufactured by Rousel of France.

Mr. Hayhoe: This drug is available in relation to two clinical trials, for which the licensing authority has granted doctor's exemption certificates. One of the trials relates to the use of the drug in abortion. The doctor responsible for the trial has confirmed that it will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Abortion Act.

Form F1D

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) whether he will consider redesigning and simplifying the form F1D ;

(2) what is the average length of time taken to process the form F1D from when it is received by the local social security office to its despatch to patient and dentist.

Mr. Major: We are considering how best to redesign and simplify form F1D in connection with the social security review changes.

Statistics are not kept routinely on the average length of time taken by local offices to process this form, so that this information could be obtained only by means of a special exercise, which would be disproportionately expensive. However, a recent survey of 20 offices has shown that 80 per cent. of claims for all agency benefits were processed within three weeks.

Dental Estimates Board

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the percentage of estimates received by the Dental Estimates Board for examination and report only during the period October to December 1985 using the new form FP 17E.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table gives the information requested. All figures are in thousands.

	October 1985	*November 1985*	*December 1985*	*Total*
(a) Number of estimates for examination and report only	746	777	729	2,252
(b) Number of estimates on Form FP 17E	26	232	301	559
(c) Percentage on form FP 17E	3·5	29·9	41·3	24·8

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the percentage of periodontal treatments paid by the Dental Estimates Board under items 3*(a)* and 5*(a)* during 1984; and whether this ratio has changed since October 1985.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1984, 76·6 per cent. of periodontal treatments were approved under item 3*(a)* and 17·6 per cent. under item 5*(a)*. Information for the period from October 1985 is not yet available, and would not be comparable as the definition of item 5*(a)* changed substantially in October 1985.

Oxford Regional Health Authority

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the total net National Health Service expenditure by his Department in the Oxfordshire health region in 1978-79 and in the latest year for which figures are available; and what percentage increase this represents in real terms after taking account of the general level of inflation.

Mr. Hayhoe: The annual accounts of health authorities (including family practitioner committees) in the Oxford health region show total net expenditure of £262·8 million for 1978-79 and £561·4 million for 1984-85. This is an increase in real terms of 20 per cent.

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many qualified nurses *(a)* in total and *(b)* per head of population were employed in the Oxfordshire regional health authority in 1978 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is given in the table:

Qualified nurses and midwives at 30 September

	1978	*1984*
*Oxford regional health authority**		
Whole time equivalent†	8,010	9,870
Ratio per 1,000‡ population	3·5	4·1

Notes:
* Excludes agency nursing and midwifery staff. Excludes student midwives, district nurse students and health visitor students.
† Figures are whole time equivalent rounded to nearest 10.
‡ Ratios have been calculated on unrounded figures.

NHS (Managers)

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new National Health Service managers who have recently been appointed have come from outside the National Health Service; and what percentage this represents of all such appointments.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand health authorities have so far appointed 80 general managers from outside the National Health Service, which represents 12·3 per cent. of the appointments made.

New Hospitals (Berkshire)

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new National Health Service hospitals have been opened in Berkshire since May 1979; and how many new National Health Service beds have been made available as a consequence.

Mr. Whitney: The table shows new hospital schemes in Berkshire completed since May 1979 and the number of beds they comprise.

	Number of Beds
Wexham Park Hospital	
Unit for Mentally Ill/ Elderly	
Mentally Infirm	70
Maternity Unit	110
Paediatric Unit	43
TOTAL	223

Major upgradings have provided a further 55 beds.

Supplementary Benefits Handbook

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to publish the November 1985 "Supplementary Benefit Handbook"; and if this will include an up to date guide to the Government's board and lodging policy.

Mr. Major: I refer the hon. Member to my hon. Friend's reply the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) on 12 February, at column *496*.

Drugs (Parallel Importers)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what action is being taken to establish the sources of product available to parallel importers, and in particular to Stephar Formaceutische Produkten whose registered address in the United Kingdom is Barclays Bank Ltd., Walton, Norfolk.

Mr. Hayhoe: Applicants for parallel import product licences are required to give the name of the European Community member state from which the medicinal product is to be imported, the product name and marketing authorisation reference number in the member state, the name and address of the holder of the marketing authorisation and of the manufacturers covered by that authorisation, the name and address of the European suppliers of the product and information about known movements of the product before it reached those suppliers.

Confirmation of the name and address of the manufacturer (among other things) is sought from the member state.

Any applications received from Stephar Formaceutische Produkten would be dealt with in the same way as applications received from any other parallel importer.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number on waiting lists at hospitals in the Sandwell health authority and Dudley health authority for those awaiting X-rays.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information she seeks. It is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairmen of the Sandwell and Dudley district health authorities, who may be able to provide the information requested.

Dentists (Service Committee Hearings)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce regulations to allow dentists to be legally represented at service committee hearings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Legal representation of either party has been avoided at service committee hearings in the interests of informality. Legal advice can be taken before or during a hearing. The parties may be legally represented at oral hearings of appeals. I have no plans to change these arrangements.

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the numbers and percentages in relation to the total number of cases where withholdings have taken place at service committee hearings for dentists, in respect of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will introduce legislation to allow non-attributable details to be published in the dental press.

Mr. Hayhoe: My right hon. Friend has directed withholdings from dentists as follows:

	1983	1984	1985
Cases investigated	323	421	651
Decision to withhold remuneration	80	145	255
Percentage	25	34	39

Family practitioner committees are aware that when action has been completed on a service committee investigation, a short summary may be issued to the press provided it excludes details from which the parties could be identified.

Teeth (Filling Materials)

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under what circumstances the Dental Estimates Board is authorised to approve the placement of composite or glass ionomer filling materials in the biting surfaces of premolar and molar teeth; if he will make a statement on the fees that can be authorised for such fillings in the posterior teeth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The board can approve the use of these materials in such circumstances as it sees fit. The fees that can be authorised for their use in posterior teeth are as follows:

Permanent teeth: £6·40 per filling, with a maximum of £9·20 for two or more fillings per tooth and an additional fee of £4·00 if pin or screw retention is used.
Deciduous teeth: £2·80 per tooth.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library figures showing how many people were in receipt of supplementary benefit in each of the years 1979 to 1985; and what percentage change in these figures occurred between 1979 and 1985, in each of the places listed in the letter to him from the hon. Member for Peckham of 29 January.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the first-year and full-year cost of extending the long-term rate of supplementary benefit to the long-term unemployed in 1985-86 and 1986-87 *(a)* net of the cost of indexation and *(b)* net of the cost of indexation and savings in other benefits as a direct result of this measure.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Members have replies as soon as possible.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 3 February, concerning supplementary benefit claims in Greenock and Port Glasgow, if he will state how much was paid by each office in each year since 1979-80.

Mr. Major: I regret that no information is available about the amount of supplementary benefit paid out each year by individual local offices. Such information could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to his reply of 20 February, *Official Report*, column 317, why information relating to young supplementary benefit claimants in Knowsley is not available.

Mr. Major: The Department's local offices keep figures of supplementary benefit claimants under three headings only—those over pension age, those who are unemployed and those under pension age who are not unemployed.

There is also an annual statistical inquiry based on a sample of cases in local offices which provides more detailed information, including estimated numbers of claimants in different age bands. However, the sample is not large enough to provide reliable estimates of individual local office figures.

Social Security Offices (Staff)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the approximate turnover of staff in grades of clerical assistant and clerical officers, respectively, in social security offices open to the public covering the Hampstead and Highgate constituency, together with maximum and minimum rates of turnover, naming the offices concerned.

Mr. Major: Following is the information for the year ending 31 December 1985.

Turnover is defined as those staff who leave the Department (including those who retire) change offices within the Department or are promoted within an office. The number of staff who leave the Department (including those who retire) is lower. Both sets of figures are set out in the table:

	Number	Per cent.
CLERICAL ASSISTANT		
Total turnover	56·5	55·9
Total of leavers	32·5	32·2
Turnover		
Maximum rate: Finsbury Park ILO	19	67·9
Minimum rate: Highgate ILO	16·5	47·1
Leavers		
Maximum rate: Finsbury Park ILO	11	39·3
Minimum rate: Euston ILO	5	20·8
CLERICAL OFFICER		
Total turnover	69·5	24·4
Total leavers	57·5	20·2
Turnover		
Maximum rate: Euston ILO	21·5	31·2
Minimum rate: Finsbury Park ILO	14·5	16·9
Leavers		
Maximum rate: Euston ILO	18·5	26·8
Minimum rate: Finsbury Park ILO	12·5	14·5

Abbreviation: ILO—Integrated Local Office

NHS Spectacles

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he plans to end the supply of National Health Service glasses through the hospital eye service;

(2) what arrangements he intends to make for patients in the hospital eye service when supplies of National Health Service glasses through the general ophthalmic service end in July.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the forecast cost saving from the changes introduced in April 1985 in the National Health Service supply of spectacles; and what is his estimate of actual savings.

Mr. Hayhoe: The expected savings in a full year in England were estimated at some £14 million. The latest provisional information indicates that the savings may be a little less than expected, but it will not be possible to assess the shortfall, if any, until after the end of the financial year.

Child Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the first-year and full-year cost of increasing child benefit by £1, £3, £5 and £10 per week in 1985-86 and 1986-87 *(a)* net of the cost of indexation and *(b)* net of the cost of indexation and savings in other benefits as a direct result of these measures.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits (Indexation)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the full-year and first-year costs of indexing each of *(a)* the single pension, *(b)* the married pension, *(c)* unemployment benefit, *(d)* child benefit and *(e)* the long-term rate of supplementary benefit in 1985-86 and 1986-87, both including and excluding savings on other benefits as a direct result of indexation of these benefits.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the first-year and full-year cost of increasing unemployment benefit by £1 and £5 per week in 1985-86 and 1986-87 *(a)* net of the cost of indexation and *(b)* net of the cost of indexation and savings in other benefits as a direct result of these measures.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, according to the most recent available figures, how many claimants are in receipt of unemployment benefit at less than the full rate *(a)* by sex and marital status and *(b)* where married, by sex and employment status of spouse.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 February 1986, c. *493-94*]: Information on the employment status of a claimant's spouse is not available. The other information requested is given in the table.

Receiving less than full rate unemployment benefit at November 1984

	Three quarter rate	*Half rate*	*Other**	*Total*
Males				
Married	5,500	3,200	17,000	25,700
Other	8,900	5,300	1,400	15,600
Females				
Married	7,500	5,000	100	12,600
Other	3,700	2,500	1,000	7,200

* These include cases of overlapping benefits, and persons who do not receive full rate benefit because of eg occupational pensions.

Pensions and Benefits

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services by how much will each of *(a)* the single pension, *(b)* the married pension, *(c)* unemployment benefit, *(d)* child benefit and *(e)* long-term rate of supplementary benefit in 1985-86 and 1986-87 have to rise to keep pace with prices.

Mr. Newton: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Severe Weather Payments

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services to which areas of the United Kingdom the exceptionally severe weather payments have now been authorised; and from what date in each case.

Mr. Newton: I understand that adjudication officers in the following local offices have declared that the weather has been exceptionally severe in their area, although this list may not be complete. Information on the date from which a period of exceptionally severe weather has been declared in each area is not available.

London North Region

Acton
Aylesbury
Barking
Bedford
Bury St. Edmunds
Cambridge
Canning Town
Ealing
Edgeware
Edmonton
Euston
Finsbury Park
Hackney
Harlesden
Harlow
Hemel Hempstead
Hertford
Highgate
Hoxton
King's Lynn
Leytonstone
Luton
Milton Keynes
Neasden
Oxford
Paddington
Peterborough
Plaistow
Poplar
Romford
St. Albans
Shoreditch
Southall
Stepney
Stevenage
Stoke Newington
Tottenham
Uxbridge
Walthamstow
Watford
Woodgrange Park
Wood Green

London South Region

Ashford
Balham
Battersea
Bexley
Bloomsbury
Bognor Regis
Bracknell
Brighton
Brixton
Bromley
Camberwell
Canterbury
Chatham
Chelsea
Chichester
Crawley
Croydon
Crystal Palace
Dartford
Dover
Eastbourne
Eltham
Epsom
Folkestone
Gravesend
Greenwich Park
Greenwich West
Guildford
Hastings
Hounslow
Hove
Kennington
Kennington Park
Kensington
Kingston-upon-Thames
Lewes
Lewisham
Maidstone
Morden
New Forest
Newport I.O.W.
Orpington
Peckham
Reading
Redhill
Rochester
Sittingbourne
Slough
Southwark
Streatham
Surbiton
Sutton
Thanet
Tunbridge Wells

Twickenham
Wandsworth
Westminster
Wimbledon
Winchester
Woking
Woolwich
Worthing

Wales and South West Region
Aberdare
Abertillery
Aberystwyth
Ammanford
Bargoed
Barnstaple
Barry
Bath
Blackwood
Bridgend
Bridgewater
Bristol Central
Bristol East
Bristol Horfield
Bristol South
Caerphilly
Cardiff Central
Cardiff East
Cardiff West
Carmarthen
Cheltenham
Chippenham
Cwmbran
Devonport
Ebbw Vale
Gloucester
Haverfordwest
Launceston
Llanelli
Merthyr Tydfil
Morriston
Neath
Newport
Newtown
Pembroke Dock
Plymouth
Portmadog/Dolgellau
Port Talbot
St. Austell
Salisbury
Stroud
Swansea
Swindon
Taunton
Truro
Weston-super-Mare
Yeovil

Midlands Region
Birmingham Bradford Street
Birmingham Edgbaston
Birmingham Erdington
Birmingham Handsworth
Birmingham Ladywood
Birmingham Northfield
Birmingham Perry Barr
Birmingham Ravenhurst
Birmingham South Yardley
Birmingham Sparkhill
Birmingham Washwood Heath
Boston
Burton on Trent
Cannock
Chesterfield
Corby
Coventry East
Coventry West
Derby Becket Street
Derby London Road
Derby Victoria Street
Dudley North
Dudley South
Grantham
Hereford
Ilkeston
Kidderminster
Lincoln Newland
Lincoln Orchard Street
Mansfield
Newcastle Staffs
Northampton
Nottingham Castle Gate
Nottingham David Lane
Nottingham Shakespeare Street
Nottingham Station Street
Nuneaton
Redditch
Shrewsbury
Skegness
Stafford
Stoke on Trent North
Stoke on Trent South
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Telford
Walsall East
Walsall West
Wellingborough
Wolverhampton North
Wolverhampton South
Worcester

North Eastern Region
Barnsley East
Barnsley West
Bradford East
Bradford South
Bradford West
Castleford
Dewsbury
Eston
Goole
Grimsby
Halifax
Harrogate
Hartlepool
Hexham
Huddersfield
Hull East
Hull West
Keighley
Leeds Central
Leeds North
Leeds North West
Leeds South
Leeds South East
Leeds West
Middlesbrough
Redcar
Scarborough
Scunthorpe
Sheffield North East
Sheffield North West
Sheffield South East
Sheffield South West
Stockton
Wakefield
Wath-on-Dearne
York

North Western Region
Buxton
Penrith

Information for Northern Ireland should be obtained from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what publicity is being given to the exceptionally severe weather payments in the areas in which such payments are now authorised.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 24 February, at column *470*.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the exceptionally severe weather payment can be authorised where payment has already been made by the individual of the current fuel bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the guidance issued by the Chief Adjudication Officer on 6 December 1985, a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the exceptionally severe weather payment is to be given when the individual pays the fuel bill by weekly or monthly stamps; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Claimants who budget for their fuel bills by purchasing weekly or monthly stamps, and whose fuel bill is then higher than expected because of a period of exceptionally severe weather, are eligible for a single payment towards the extra cost of meeting the bill.

Oswestry Hospital (Casualty Department)

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has made any decision yet about Shropshire health authority's proposed closure of the Oswestry and district hospital casualty department since he received the proposal in 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: This proposal was referred to the Department by the West Midlands regional health authority in January 1985 and I have since received representations from my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). Now that the supplementary information requested by the Department has been received, I shall consider the matter carefully.

Abortion

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the proprietors and location of those hospitals or other premises which are equipped to perform abortions; and how many beds each unit has;

(2) if he will list in the *Official Report* those hospitals which are equipped to perform abortions after 20 weeks gestation;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the names of representatives from each hospital who met the Minister for Health on 2 August 1985 to discuss late abortion.

Mr. Hayhoe: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to non-NHS hospitals. Information about such hospitals approved under the Abortion Act is as follows:

Approved places	*Approved beds*	*Name of proprietor*
Acland Nuffield Hospital, Banbury Road, Oxford	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Alexandra Hospital, Mill Lane, Cheadle, Cheshire	1	AMI Health Services Limited
Alexandra Hospital, Impton Lane, Walderslade, Kent	6	NME Hospitals (UK) Limited
Avenue Clinic, 14 New Church Road, Hove, Sussex	6	Avenue Clinic Limited
Bath Clinic, Claverton Down Road, Combe Down	5	Bath Private Hospital Limited
Beechwood Private Clinic, Norton Church Road, Norton, Sheffield	20	Beechwood Private Clinic Limited
Belvedere Nursing Home, Belvedere Road, Scarborough	3	Belvedere Nursing Home Limited
Blackdown Nursing Home, Old Milverton Lane, Blackdown, Leamington Spa	33	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Bromhead Nursing Home, Nettleham Road, Lincoln	1	Bromhead Nursing Home Trust Limited
BUPA Hospital, Heathbourne Road, Bushey, Watford, Herts	4	BUPA Hospitals Limited
BUPA Murrayfield Hospital, Holmwood Drive, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside	4	BUPA Hospitals Limited
BUPA Hospital, Old Watton Road, Colney, Norwich	4	BUPA Hospitals Limited
Calthorpe Nursing Home, 4 Arthur Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham	22	Calthorpe Nursing Home Limited
Chalybeate Hospital, Chalybeate Close, Tremona Road, Southampton, Hants	5	HCA UK Limited
Chesterfield Nuffield Hospital, Clifton Hill, Bristol	5	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Clare Park Clinic, Clare Park, Crondall Lane, Crondall, Farnham, Surrey	2	HCA UK Limited
Cleveland Nuffield Hospital, Junction Road, Norton, Stockton-on-Tees	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Cotswold Nuffield Hospital, Talbot Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Danum Lodge Nursing Home, 123 Thorne Road, Doncaster	24	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Dean Park Nursing Home, 23-25 Ophir Road, Bournemouth, Dorset	26	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Duchy Hospital, Penventinnie Lane, Treliske, Truro	5	The Cornwall Independent Hospitals Trust Limited
Duchy House Nuffield Hospital, Queen's Road, Harrogate	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Evelyn Hospital, Trumpington Road, Cambridge	4	Committee of Management of Hospital
Exeter Nuffield Hospital, Wonford Road, Exeter	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Fairfield Nursing Home, 68 Russell Road, Buckhurst Hill, Essex	29	Fairfield Nursing Home Limited
Fallodon Private Nursing Home, 4 Allerton Park, Leeds	21	Leeds Private Hospital Limited
Fitzwilliam Hospital, Milton Way, South Bretton, Peterborough	4	Fitzwilliam Hospital Limited
Foscote Private Hospital, Foscote Road, Banbury	2	Foscote Court (Banbury) Trust Limited
Fulford Grange Hospital, Micklefield Lane, Rawdon, Leeds	2	Fulford Grange Hospital Limited
Garden Hospital, 46-50 Sunny Gardens Road, Hendon, London NW4	3	Health Care Services plc
Highfield Private Hospital, Manchester Road, Rochdale	3	Highfield Private Nursing Home Limited and Rochdale Surgical Unit Limited
HRH Princess Christian's Hospital*, 12 Clarence Road, Windsor, Berks	5	Trustees of Hospital
Hull Nuffield Hospital, Westbourne Avenue, Hull	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Ipswich Surgical Nursing Home, 57 Fonnereau Road, Ipswich, Suffolk	2	Ipswich Surgical Home Association (Guarantee) Limited

Approved places	Approved beds	Name of proprietor
Leicester Nuffield Hospital, Scraptoft Lane, Leicester	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Leigham Private Clinic*, 76 Leigham Court Road, London SW16	29	Leigham Private Clinic Limited (Railford Limited)
Marie Stopes Nursing Home, 10 Manstone Road, London NW2	13	Population Services Family Planning Programmes Limited.
Merseyside Nursing Home, 32 Parkfield Road, Liverpool	30	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Newcastle Nuffield Hospital, Osborne Avenue, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
New Hall Hospital, Bodeham, Salisbury, Wiltshire	4	Salisbury Independent Hospital and Medical Services Limited
New Victoria Hospital, 184 Coombe Lane West, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey	2	Trustees of Hospital
Park Hospital, Sherwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham	6	Nottinghamshire Private Consultants Limited
Parkfield Private Hospital, Parkfield Road, Rotherham, South Yorkshire	4	Mr. A. R. Mead
Parkview Clinic*, 87 Mattock Lane, Ealing, London W5	30	London Nursing Homes Limited
Plymouth Nuffield Hospital, Derriford Road, Derriford, Plymouth	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Raleigh Nursing Home*, 1A Raleigh Gardens, Brixton Hill, London SW2	19	Raleigh Nursing Homes Limited
Robert Nursing Home*, 162 Station Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham	14	Robert Nursing Home Limited
Rosslyn Nursing Home*, 15-17 Rosslyn Road, East Twickenham, Middlesex	37	Pregnancy Advisory Services Limited
Royal Masonic Hospital, Ravenscourt Park, London W6 0TN	4	Committee of Hospital
Salop Nuffield Hospital, Longden Road, Shrewsbury SY3 9PD	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Sarum Road Private Nursing Home, Sarum Road, Winchester, Hampshire	4	Bedrose Properties Limited
Somerset Nuffield Hospital, Staplegrove Elm, Taunton, Somerset	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
South Manchester Private Clinic, 136 Chester Road, Hazel Grove, Stockport	21	Dalreagh Private Nursing Home Limited
St. Wilfrid's Nursing Home, 51 Bawtry Road, Bessacarr, Doncaster	2	D. S. Nursing Homes (Doncaster) Limited
Thames Valley Nuffield Hospital, Wexham Street, Slough	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Victoria House Nursing Home, Victoria Street, Rochester, Kent	6	Dr. H. Elman JP
Wellesley Hospital, Eastern Avenue, Southend-on-Sea	2	Wellesley Hospital Limited
Wessex Nuffield Hospital, Winchester Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
West Sussex Clinic, 48 Shelley Road, Worthing	2	G. M. Health Care Limited
Winterbourne Hospital, Herringston Road, Dorchester, Dorset	4	Winterbourne Hospital Limited
Wistons Nursing Home*, 138 Dyke Road, Brighton	51	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Woking Nuffield Hospital, Shores Road, Woking	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Wye Valley Nuffield Hospital, Venns Lane, Hereford	2	Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust
Yorkshire Clinic, Bradford Road, Bingley, West Yorkshire	6	West Yorkshire Independent Hospital PLC

* Approved for abortions after 20 weeks gestation.

At the meeting with my Department's officials on 2 August 1985 all those places approved for abortion above 20 weeks were represented either by the proprietors or their nominees.

Pregnancy and Abortion Referral Agencies

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the names of the proprietors and location of those organisations or hospitals registered or licensed by his Department as pregnancy advisory or abortion referral agencies.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

Pregnancy Advisory Bureaux	*Name of Proprietor*
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Basingstoke Branch, Church Grange Health Centre, Bramleys Drive, Basingstoke RG21 1QN	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Birmingham Pregnancy Consultation Service, 14-16 Temple Street, Birmingham B2 5BG	Fraterdrive (PAS) Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Birmingham Branch, Guildhall Buildings, Navigation Street, Birmingham B2 4BT	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Blackpool Pregnancy Testing and Counselling Centre, Stanley Buildings, 3 Caunce Street, Blackpool	Sister Rose Private Health Care Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Bournemouth (Pelhams) Branch, Pelhams Clinic, Millhams Road, Bournemouth	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Bournemouth (Dean Park) Branch, 23 Ophir Road, Bournemouth	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Brighton Branch, Wistons Site, Chatsworth Road, Brighton, Sussex BN1 5PA	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Brook Advisory Centre (Avon), 21 Richmond Hill, Clifton, Bristol, B58 1BA	Brook Advisory Centres Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Chester Branch, 98A Foregate Street, Chester CH1 1HB	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Coventry Branch, Coundon Health Clinic, Baker Butts Lane, Coventry	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Doncaster Branch, The Bungalow, 1A Avenue Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Rosslyn, 17 Rosslyn Road, East Twickenham, Middlesex TW1 2AR	Pregnancy Advisory Service
Sister Rose Pregnancy, Advisory Centre (Hull), 139 Beverley Road, Hull	Sister Rose Private Health Care Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Hull Branch, 32 Beverley Road, Hull HU3 1YF	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Leeds Branch, 8 The Headrow, Leeds, Yorkshire	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre (Leeds), 4 Albion Street, Leeds 1	Sister Rose Private Health Care Ltd.
Marie Stopes Centre, 10 Queens Square, Leeds 2	Population Services, FP Programmes Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Liverpool Branch, 20-22 Rodney Street, Liverpool L1 2TQ	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Pregnancy Advisory Service, Fourth Floor, Hepworth Chambers, Church Street, Liverpool L1 3BG	Fraterdrive (PAS) Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, London Branch, 7 Belgrave Road, London SW1	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Birth Control and Pregnancy Counselling Ltd. 56 Harley Street, London W1	Birth Control and Pregnancy Counselling Ltd.
London Youth Advisory Centre, 26 Prince of Wales Road, London NW5	London Youth Advisory Centre
Metropolitan Pregnancy Control Centre, 77 Tottenham Court Road, London W1	Metropolitan Pregnancy Control Centre Ltd.
Pregnancy Advisory Service, 11-13 Charlotte Street, London W1	Pregnancy Advisory Service Ltd.
Preterm, 40 Mortimer Street, London W1N 7RB	Population Services, FP Programmes Ltd.
The Well Woman Centre, Marie Stopes House, 108 Whitfield Street, London W1	Population Services, FP Programmes Ltd.

Pregnancy Advisory Bureaux	Name of Proprietor
The Well Woman Centre, 114 Whitfield Street, London W1	Population Services, FP Programmes Ltd.
Pregnancy and Gynaecological Advisory Service, 26 Fouberts Place, London W1N 1HG	Detingen Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Luton Branch, 3A Upper George Street, Luton LU1 2QY	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Manchester Branch, Suite F, Ground Floor, Fourways House, 57 Hilton Street, Manchester M1 2EJ	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Marie Stopes, 1 Police Street, Manchester M2 7LQ	Population Services, FP Programmes Ltd.
Pregnancy Advisory Service—Manchester, 5th Floor, Newton Buildings, Newton Street, Manchester M1 2EJ	Fraterdrive (PAS) Ltd.
Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre (Manchester), Fifth Floor, 2 St. John Street, Manchester 3	Sister Rose Private Health Care Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Milton Keynes Branch, First Floor, Eaglestones Health Centre, Standing Way, Milton Keynes MK6 5AZ	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
East Midlands Pregnancy Advisory Service, The Grange, 1 Private Road, Sherwood, Nottingham	East Midlands Pregnancy Advisory Service Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Sheffield Branch, 160 Charles Street, Sheffield S1 2NE	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
408 Young People's Consultation Centre Ltd., 408 Ecclesall Road, Sheffield S11 8PJ	408 Young People's Consultation Centre Ltd.
Sheffield Pregnancy & Counselling Service, 276 Glossop Road, Sheffield S10 5HL	Mrs. Janet Fiore and Mrs. Celia Spooner
Pregnancy Advisory Service, 1A George Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire	Dalreagh Nursing Home Ltd.
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Swindon Branch, Priory Road Health Clinic, Priory Road, Swindon SN3 2EZ	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
British Pregnancy Advisory Service, Leamington Spa Branch, Holly Walk Welfare Clinic, Holly Walk, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire	British Pregnancy Advisory Service
Sister Rose Pregnancy Advisory Centre (Wolverhampton), Second Floor, 19-21 Queen Street, Wolverhampton	Sister Rose Private Health Care Ltd.

Benefits

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* supplementary benefit and *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit excluding lone parents, couples with children and pensioners for the latest available year in Scotland;

(2) what was the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* supplementary benefit and *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit excluding lone parents, couples with children and pensioners for the latest available year in Wales;

(3) what was the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* supplementary benefit and *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit, excluding lone parents, couples with children and pensioners for the latest available year.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February, 1986 c. *371*]: The information requested is given in the table.

	Great Britain	Scotland	Wales	Latest available date
Unemployment benefit	654,000	85,000	36,000	November 1984
Supplementary benefit	1,630,000	190,000	100,000	December 1983
Unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit*	100,000	10,000	5,000	December 1983

* These figures are included in the overall supplementary benefit figures.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the number of claimant couples with children in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* supplementary benefit and *(d)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year in Scotland;

(2) what was the number of claimant couples with children in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* supplementary benefit and *(d)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year in Wales;

(3) what was the number of claimant couples with children in receipt of *(a)* family income supplement, *(b)* unemployment benefit, *(c)* supplementary benefit and *(d)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *371*]: The information requested is as follows:

Benefit	*Number of claimant couples with children in*			*Latest available date*
	(i) Great Britain	*(ii) Scotland*	*(iii) Wales*	
Family income supplement	115,000	12,000	8,000	November 1985
Unemployment benefit*	22,200	2,900	1,200	November 1984
Supplementary benefit	395,000	40,000	25,000	December 1983
Unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit†	105,000	10,000	5,000	December 1983

*Figures related solely to claimants in receipt of adult and child dependency additions.
†These figures are included in the overall supplementary benefit figures.

Disabled People (Consultation Papers)

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why copies of his consultation papers on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill were not sent to the Disablement Income Group, the National League for the Blind, and the Liverpool Association for the Disabled; and if he will now do so.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1986, c. *316*]: As I indicated in my reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe on 14 February, at columns *596-97*, copies of the Department's consultation paper were sent initially to a number of major national organisations concerned with disability issues. It would not have been practicable to invite comments from all voluntary organisations who might have an interest, but, as I made clear when the document was published, the Department will send a copy on request to any other person or organisation who wishes to have one. The Disablement Income Group has already requested and been sent a copy of the consultation paper, and I am also arranging for copies to be sent to the National League for the Blind and Disabled, and the Liverpool Association for the Disabled and to other organisations which have requested copies.

Dental Charges

Mr. Weetch asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of the revenue from dental charges was accounted for by dentures in the years 1956, 1964, 1974 and 1984.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 February 1986, c. *316*]: The approximate proportion of the revenue from dental charges in England and Wales accounted for by the provision of dentures in 1956, 1964, 1974 and the financial year 1984-85 is as follows:

Year	*per cent.*
1956	60
1964	55
1974	30
1984-85	20

Information for the calendar year 1984 is not available.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the operation of the powers whereby local authorities can add to benefits payable in respect of disabled people in private and voluntary homes for the elderly.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1986]: Local authorities have powers, which may be operated at their discretion, to meet for certain claimants in residential care homes any excess of the homes' charges over their supplementary benefit payments. Information on these powers is given in circular LASS L(86) 1, a copy of which is in the Library.

Social Security Reform

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what discussions he has had with student organisations concerning the social security review.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1986]: The National Union of Students submitted written evidence to the review of social security last year. I met representatives of the NUS last week to discuss the relevant aspects of the White Paper on the "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691), and the specific proposals which are currently the subject of consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. Ron Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, pursuant to the answer of 14 February, *Official Report*, column *595*, if any of the research into Alzheimer's disease referred to will deal with a possible correlation between the disease and aluminium levels in water.

Mr. Walden: I have been asked to reply.

Yes. The Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid through the Department, has recently initiated epidemiological studies on the possible correlation between Alzheimer's disease and aluminium levels in water.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 27 February 1986

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

United States (Export Regulations)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to investigate the impact on United Kingdom high technology exports of the attempted imposition of United States export regulations by the United States subsidiary companies.

Mr. Pattie: The United Kingdom remains firmly opposed to extraterritorial United States re-export controls and to the implied claim of the United States to jurisdiction in the United Kingdom. It is not possible to measure the impact of the imposition of such controls by United States subsidiaries. Companies with difficulties should approach the Department for advice.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he has taken to investigate the attempts by United States Government officials to audit and examine the books of United Kingdom computer and electronics companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Government are considering a request from the United States authorities for agreement to United States officials visiting a number of United Kingdom companies in connection with United States distribution licence regulations introduced last year. The United States authorities recognise that no such visits may take place without prior approval.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Butcher: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following establishments — premises for which my right hon. Friend is responsible.

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	24
Regional or local offices	140
Storage buildings	26
Research establishments and laboratories	9

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances. This may, as in the case of hospital catering, lead to a reappraisal of Crown immunity.

Copyright

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will list those consumer organisations from which he has received representations concerning the recent discussion document on the recording and rental of audio and video copyright material;

(2) whether he has received any representations from the National Consumer Council concerning the discussion document on the record and rental of audio and video copyright material; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The National Consumer Council, the Consumers Association and the Consumers in the European Community Group have responded to the Green Paper "The Recording and Rental of Audio and Video Copyright Material" (Cmnd. 9445). The Government's conclusions on the matters raised in this Green Paper will be announced in a White Paper which is now in an advanced state of preparation.

Innovation and Technology (Promotion)

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps his Department is taking to promote and encourage innovation and technology.

Mr. Pattie: A range of measures are operated by my Department to promote, encourage and support research and development, innovation and the spread and application of up-to-date technology. The major points are as follows.

The business and technical advisory services help small and medium firms benefit from consultancy advice on technical problems, quality and design and the exploitation of new technology.

The support for innovation scheme introduced in May 1982 offers financial support for research and development projects leading to new products and processes. £790 million has been offered to support over 6,500 projects.

Support for national regional investment includes grants for selected capital investment projects including the production or design of advanced microelectronics, fibre optic and opto-electronic components, and for the acquisition of CAD systems for the design of integrated circuits.

My Department supports collaborative R and D. A notable example is the Alvey programme, a five-year programme of collaborative research in advanced information technology.

Assistance is provided to civil aircraft and aero-engine R and D and to support the space programme.

My Department includes four industrial research establishments, the National Physical Laboratory, the National Engineering Laboratory, Warren Spring Laboratory and the Laboratory of the Government Chemist.

My Department actively promotes international R and D programmes such as ESPRIT and EUREKA in order that British firms secure the benefits of participation.

In all, this year my Department's expenditure on scientific and technological assistance and support for investment in innovation is expected to be about £440 million.

Iron Foundries (Modernisation)

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what Government assistance is available to independently owned iron founders towards the cost of modernisation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: My Department offers a variety of forms of assistance under its support for business schemes. Most of these are applicable to independently owned iron founders. I shall be writing to the hon. Gentleman with details.

Distillers Company (Bid)

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he plans to refer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission the revised bid by Guinness for Distillers in the light of the proposed reduction in Guinness's share of the future whisky market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Minister for Information Technology will make his decision in the light of advice from the Director General of Fair Trading.

Manufactured Exports

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what the United Kingdom's share of world manufactured exports was in 1985, in 1979 and 1960.

Mr. Butcher: Data for the main manufacturing countries, which account for around two thirds of world exports of manufactures, are more up to date than figures for all countries. This information is in the table.

United Kingdom share of main manufacturing countries Exports of manufactures†*

	Per cent.‡
1960	16·5
1979	9·1
1985 Jan to Sept	‖7·9

Notes:
* United Kingdom, Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium/Luxembourg, France, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, Canada and Japan.
† Standard International Trade Classification, sections 5 to 8.
‡ Based on figures in US dollars, at current prices and exchange rates.
‖ = estimate.

British Telecom (Flotation)

Mr. Blair asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if his Department has received the Director of Public Prosecution's report on dealings by individuals in the Heron Corporation and Harris Queensway in British Telecom shares at the time of flotation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Pattie: The Director of Public Prosecutions has referred to my Department a report by the police on certain dealings in BT shares and this is being studied.

Hall Russell Shipbuilders

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of bids lodged on Friday 21 February for Hall Russell, Shipbuilders, Aberdeen; what were the names of the bidders; and if he will make a statement on the successful bidder.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply,* 26 February 1986, c. *583*]: While the names of bidders is commercially confidential information, I can confirm that three bids were received. I can only announce the name of a successful bidder when I have given my consent to British Shipbuilders to sell the yard.

PRIME MINISTER

Channel Tunnel

Q97. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Prime Minister if she ascertained from President Mitterrand at her meeting on 12 February whether his Government share the view of Her Majesty's Government that the funding of the Channel tunnel should be entirely from private investments; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Both Governments are fully agreed that the Channel tunnel should be constructed without recourse to public money or Government commercial guarantee.

Westland plc

Q131. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of Sir Robert Armstrong's statement in evidence to the Defence Committee on 5 February, she will now seek to correct the version of her reply to a question from the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow) recorded in the *Official Report* of 23 January, at column 455, in so far as it indicates to which aspect of her involvement in the Westland affair the giving of her consent was intended to refer; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have nothing to add to the full account which I gave to the House in my statement on 23 January at columns 449-460 and in the debate on 27 January at columns 651-658.

As to my reply to the hon. Member for Woking (Mr. Onslow), I refer the hon. Member to my remarks in the debate on 27 January at column 682.

British Leyland

Q143. **Mr. Ashton** asked the Prime Minister if she will now pay a visit to a British Leyland factory to meet the work force.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Q144. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister what discussions she has had with leaders of Northern Ireland parties since she signed the Anglo-Irish agreement; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I met the leader of the Alliance party on 22 November last year, a delegation from the Assembly led by the Speaker on 25 November, and the leaders of the Ulster Unionist party and the Democratic Unionist party on 25 February. Later today I shall meet the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party. I have listened to and recognise the concerns of party leaders about the Anglo-Irish agreement. I made it clear on 25 February to the Unionist party leaders that while the Government is committed to implementing the agreement we would like to establish new arrangements for enabling Unionists to make their views known to us on affairs in Northern Ireland. I have also proposed consultations on

the Northern Ireland Assembly and about arrangements for handling Northern Ireland business in Parliament at Westminster. The Unionist leaders have proposed a round table conference on devolution in Northern Ireland, which we have agreed to consider positively.

It was agreed that both sides would reflect on these suggestions and meet again shortly. Meanwhile, I shall be seeing leaders of the other constitutional parties.

Engagements

Mr. Amess asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

Mr. Yeo asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 27 February.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme

Mr. Meacher asked the Prime Minister whether the Government intend to make any further changes in the principal Civil Service pension scheme; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. Two minor improvements to the injury benefits provisions are being implemented. A number of issues are under consideration in consultation with the trade unions. Like other employers with occupational schemes, the Government will be considering the implications for the principal Civil Service pension scheme of the current Social Security Bill.

Scottish Universities (Funding)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on co-ordination between the Department of Education and Science and the Scottish Office on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards proposals by the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council for the future funding of universities in Scotland.

The Prime Minister: There is close co-ordination between the Department of Education and Science and the Scottish Office on higher education policy, and this has been maintained at all stages during the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's strategy review and since its report was published. Decisions on the future funding arrangements for the Scottish universities will be made in due course.

EMPLOYMENT

News International Printing Plant, Wapping

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many industrial injuries there have been at the News International, Wapping, newspaper printing plant.

Mr. Trippier: Since the start of production at the plant on 25 January, one accident causing personal injury has been reported to the Health and Safety Executive as required by the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1980.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which the Secretary of State for Employment is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Trippier: Crown Immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions/premises for which we are responsible:

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	28
Regional, area or local offices	2,477
Skillcentres and Employment Rehabilitation centres	97
Laboratories	3
Storage Buildings/Warehouses	2

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

There is a difference between food hygiene legislation and heath and safety legislation. Whereas the Food Hygiene Regulations do not apply on Crown premises, the Health and Safety at Work Act, for example, does so apply. the Crown is subject to notices similar in purpose to those issued to other bodies under the Act and under which specified improvements can be required to be made. The Crown is, of course, immune from prosecution under either set of provisions.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its own merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances. This may, as in the case of hospital catering, lead to a reappraisal of Crown immunity.

Unregistered Workplaces

Mr. Litherland asked the Paymaster General how many man hours have been devoted to seeking out small unregistered workplaces; and how many have been identified in 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Figures for the whole of 1985 are not available. In the period 1 April to 29 September 1985, it is estimated that factory inspectors spent 19,000 man hours seeking out and inspecting 9,184 previously unregistered premises.

Magnox Stations

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Paymaster General how many *(a)* routine visits and *(b)* visits in relation to specific incidents have been made to Magnox nuclear power stations by the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive in each year since 1974; and how many investigations of incidents undertaken by the inspectorate have been published.

Mr. Trippier: The number of routing visits to Magnox nuclear power stations by the nuclear installations inspectorate for each year since 1974 is as follows:

Year	Number
1974	174
1975	187
1976	222
1977	241
1978	214
1979	190
1980	184
1981	177
1982	165
1983	197
1984	173
1985	142

Information on the numbers of visits in response to specific incidents is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Tourist Boards

Mr. Rowe asked the Paymaster General whether he has reached a conclusion on the recent recommendation by the Trade and Industry Committee for a new statutory structure of tourist boards.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: In its report on tourism, published on 15 January, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry recommended that the British Tourist Authority, the English tourist board, the Scottish tourist board and the Wales tourist board should be abolished, that the status of the Northern Ireland tourist board should be down-graded, and that responsibility for the development of tourism, both domestically and overseas, should pass to a new statutory body called the British tourist board, supported by a statutory regional structure.

The Government will be making a formal response to the Select Committee's report, which contains a wide range of other recommendations about the promotion of tourism, in due course. However, the Government are aware of the damaging effect of uncertainty on the existing tourist boards, which have already undergone considerable reorganisation in recent years, as well as on the industry which engages in joint promotional work with them.

I have therefore consulted my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland about the Select Committee's proposals for an alternative to current statutory arrangements. We have concluded that, in the interests of the effective promotion of tourism within the United Kingdom, we should maintain the existing structure of the statutory tourist boards and ministerial responsibility for them and to concentrate on continuing to improve the liaison and co-operation between the boards.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Legal Process (Review)

22. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Attorney-General if a review of the legal process in Northern Ireland has been initiated.

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor is conducting a review of the current practice of using juries in personal injury actions and the Northern Ireland court service is considering the results of the civil justice review in England and Wales to consider whether any of these might be applied to the Province.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Attorney-General if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he or the Lord Chancellor is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity, and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

The Attorney-General: I have no such responsibility. The Lord Chancellor's Department is responsible for the following premises to which Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies.

Category	Number
Court Buildings	411
Central departmental offices	13
Regional or local offices	96
Other premises	26

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

The Lord Chancellor's policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits and to apply standards consistent with the regulations. If he had evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, he would consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these cirsumstances.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Falkland Islands

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the Government's expenditure on civilian projects in the Falkland Islands each year since 1979.

Mr. Raison: For the financial year 1979-80 to 1984-85 (the last for which figures are available) expenditure was as follows:

	£ million
1979-80	1·1
1980-81	1·0
1981-82	1·0
1982-83	10·4
1983-84	6·1
1984-85	7·0

ENERGY

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make available the corporate plan of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board and I am asking the chairman to write to the hon. Member.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many ex-miners have found full-time employment via NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: At the end of January 1986 NBC (Enterprise) Ltd. had assisted in the creation of 4,412 job prospects, providing employment opportunities for ex-NBC employees and for mining communities generally. 305 job opportunities have been created directly as a result of projects set up by former NCB employees.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to support with research grants the installation of multiple small wind energy collectors as well as of the single large collectors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Small wind turbines are now commercially available and it is therefore not appropriate for my Department to contribute towards the installation costs of such "wind farms". Proposals for the monitoring of wind farms would be considered sympathetically.

Oil Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of total world oil production was represented by United Kingdom oil production in 1985; and how this figure has changed since 1980.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: In 1985 United Kingdom oil production represented 4·5 per cent. of world oil production; in 1980 this proportion was 2·5 per cent.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Peter Walker: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions-premises for which I am responsible:

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	1
Gas and Oil Measurement Branch specialised building	1
Storage buildings	2

In addition to these installations, I am responsible for the Government oil pipeline and storage system which is managed by the Oil and Pipelines Agency. This comprises over 1,000 miles of pipeline with 23 active storage facilities and 24 sites in varying stages of disposal.

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate (Letter)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy when the hon. Member for Yeovil can expect to receive a reply to the letter dated 16 January which he sent to the chief inspector of the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that the chief inspector of the nuclear installations inspectorate replied to the hon. Member on 21 February 1986.

Sellafield

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate the area from which nuclear installations inspectorate inspectors are being withdrawn in order to be deployed to Sellafield; and if he will indicate the effect this will have on the completion of the 20-year safety reviews on certain nuclear power stations.

Mr. Goodlad: I am informed by the NII that the team which will undertake the review of safety at Sellafield will be drawn mainly from branch 3 of the inspectorate, which normally carries out some of the routine inspection functions and safety assessment work related to new plants built at Sellafield. The Sellafield review will not have any effect on the completion of the long-term safety reviews of Magnox stations.

Trawsfynydd (Incident)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy what was the nature of the incident which occured at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station at about 8 a.m. on 21 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that it was a minor incident. I have asked the Board's chairman to give the hon. Member a full description of it.

Magnox Stations

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many nuclear incidents at Magnox nuclear power stations have been reported to his Department since 1974; and how many of these incidents have resulted in the declaring of a site alert.

Mr. Goodlad: Between 1974 and July 1982, 65 incidents involving Magnox nuclear power stations were reported to my Department. Between July 1982 and the present time, seven incidents have been reported. Most of the incidents were of a minor or trivial nature. Only on two occasions was a "site alert" declared.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

15. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he proposes to take to implement article 12 of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Scott: As my right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal indicated to the House on 17 February, consideration of the matter continues.

19. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the workings of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Scott: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to a question by the hon. Member for the Isle of Wight earlier today.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what effect the Anglo-Irish agreement has had on the security situation in the Province.

Mr. Scott: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mr. Flannery) earlier today.

Tourism (Accommodation Grants)

16. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on how tourism in Northern Ireland will benefit from the reopening of the accommodation grant scheme.

Dr. Boyson: The re-opening of the accommodation grants scheme offers an incentive to owners of tourist accommodation to improve their facilities so that the Province can compete successfully in the international tourist market.

Political Institutions

17. **Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what political institutions he is considering to enable the leaders of the political parties in the Province to play a part in its government.

Mr. Tom King: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I made it clear to Unionist leaders on 25 February that the Government wished to talk to the political parties about new arrangements to enable them to play a part in the administration of Northern Ireland. We continue to believe that a widely acceptable devolved government would be the best way of doing so.

Kilroot Power Station

18. **Mr. Cash** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the progress being made on the conversion of Kilroot power station as announced in the House by his predecessor on 22 May 1985.

Dr. Boyson: Work on the conversion of the station has now begun and one of the two generating sets was taken out of service in January. The main contract, valued at some £40 million, for the conversion of the station's boilers, has been agreed with Northern Engineering Industries; and most of the remaining contracts will be let during the course of 1986. The conversion project, which is estimated to cost £112 million at outturn prices, is scheduled to be completed by mid 1989.

Terrorism

20. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have been killed by terrorist action in Northern Ireland in each of the past five years; and, of these numbers, how many were members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

Year	*Total Numbers of Deaths*	*Number of RUC Deaths*
1981	84	21
1982	85	12
1983	66	18
1984	53	9
1985	49	23

Deaths caused by the security forces in incidents initiated by terrorist action are not included.

Enterprise Ulster

21. **Mr. Hume** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the Government's plans for the future of Enterprise Ulster.

Dr. Boyson: The future of Enterprise Ulster is under review in consultation with the board of Enterprise Ulster and other interested parties. No decisions have yet been taken.

Security Statistics

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the security statistics for 1985 are now available, together with details of persons charged with terrorist-type offences and convictions for scheduled offences for the year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 February 1986, c. *76*]: Yes, the statistics together with those since 1971 are as follows:

Statistics on Security
Part I—Statistics of Terrorist activity
Yearly figures: 1971—1985

	1971	*1972*	*1973*	*1974*	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Shooting Incidents‡	1,756	10,628	5,018	3,206	1,803	1,908	1,081	755	728	642	815(327)	382(165)	290(134)	230(104)	196(41)
Explosions	1,022	1,382	978	685	399	766	366	455	422	280	398	219	266	193	148
Bombs neutralised	493	471	542	428	236	426	169	178	142	120	131	113	101	55	67
*Weight of explosives in lbs**															
Explosions	10,972	47,462	47,472	46,435	13,753	17,596	2,839	5,343	11,181	9,059	9,261	11,199	6,923	8,545	11,711
Neutralised	3,001	19,978	32,450	27,094	11,159	16,252	2,188	5,860·5	4,530	6,405	9,168	7,300	7,503	6,114	7,715
Armed robberies	437	1,931	1,215	1,231	1,201	813	591	442	434	412	587	580	622	627	459
Amount stolen	303,787	790,687	612,015	572,951	572,105	545,497	446,988	232,650	568,359	496,825	854,929	1,392,202	830,258	701,903	655,690
Malicious fires†‖	—	—	587	636	248	453	432	269	315	275	536	499	528	840	740

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Deaths															
Civilian	115	322	171	166	216	245	69	50	51	50	57	57	44	36	25
Army/UDR	48	129	66	35	20	29	29	21	48	16	23	28	15	19	6
RUC/RUC 'R'	11	17	13	15	11	23	14	10	14	9	21	12	18	9	23
Injuries															
Civilian	1,838	3,813	1,812	1,680	2,044	2,162	1,027	548	557	530	878	328	280	513	468
Army/UDR	390	578	548	483	167	264	188	135	153	77	140	98	88	86	33
RUC/RUC 'R'	315	485	291	235	263	303	183	302	165	194	332	99	142	267	415

* Estimated weight only.
† No figure for April—June 1981.
‡ Figures in ( ) refer to shots heard only and not included in the total.
‖ Consolidated figures not available for earlier years.

Statistics on Security
Part II—Statistics of security forces' activity
Yearly figures: 1971—1985

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Houses searched*	17,262	36,617	74,556	71,914	30,092	34,939	20,724	15,462	6,452	4,106	4,104	4,045	1,497	1,282	812
Finds															
Firearms	717	1,264	1,595	1,260	825	837	590	400	301	203	409	317	200	197	238
Ammunition (rounds)	157,944	183,410	187,399	147,202	73,604	70,306	52,091	43,512	46,280	28,078	47,127	41,452	32,451	17,211	13,748
Explosives	2,748	41,488	38,418	26,120	11,565	21,714	3,809	2,108	1,996	1,810	7,536	5,066	3,762	8,534	7,373

Persons charged with terrorist type offences†

	31 July—31 December 1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Murder	13	71	77	138	120	131	60	45	63	48	50	75	41	24
Attempted Murder	16	85	76	88	121	135	79	39	59	72	96	60	68	52
Firearms Offences	242	631	545	460	353	301	225	177	112	155	173	150	155	105
Explosives Offences	86	236	161	100	215	146	79	40	39	39	41	48	21	37
Theft Act	111	186	239	314	188	203	151	159	128	158	130	119	94	65
Other	63	205	276	97	279	392	249	210	149	446	196	161	149	239
Total	531	1,414	1,374	1,197	1,276	1,308	843	670	550	918	686	613	528	522

* Includes occupied and unocupied houses searched.
† these figures are not available in consolidated form for earlier years.

Convictions for scheduled offences—January to December 1985

Offence	*Number convicted*	*Non-custodial sentence*	*Young offenders centre training schools*	*Less than five years*	*Five years and less than seven years*	*Seven years and less than 10 years*	*Ten years and less than 15 years*	*Fifteen years and less than 20 years*	*Twenty years and over*	*Life*
Murder	38	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
Attempted murder	20	1	0	0	0	4	6	6	3	0
Conspiracy to murder	10	1	0	1	3	2	3	0	0	0
Manslaughter	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm	8	0	1	4	1	0	2	0	0	0
Assault occasioning grievous bodily harm	6	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing grievous bodily harm	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Causing explosion	13	0	0	0	6	7	0	0	0	0
Placing explosive	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing explosives with intent	16	4	2	3	3	2	1	1	0	0
Other explosive offences	6	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0
Possessing a firearm with intent	55	18	5	11	8	7	5	1	0	0
Possessing a firearm	53	28	5	16	4	0	0	0	0	0
Carrying a firearm with intent	18	11	0	4	3	0	0	0	0	0
Other major firearms offences	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Minor firearms Offences	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery	160	88	31	20	13	5	3	0	0	0
Aggravated robbery	7	4	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0

Offence	Number convicted	Non-custodial sentence	Young offenders centre training schools	Less than five years	Five years and less than seven years	Seven years and less than 10 years	Ten years and less than 15 years	Fifteen years and less than 20 years	Twenty years and over	Life
Attempted robbery	20	9	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burglary	16	7	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Aggravated burglary	3	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Membership of illegal organisations	8	7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unlawful collection of information	4	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Contributing to resources of a proscribed organisation	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Assisting offenders	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kidnapping and false imprisonment	8	4	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possession of an offensive weapon	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hijacking	28	21	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Attempted hijacking	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arson	32	20	7	5	0	0	0	0	0	0
Petrol bomb offences	88	65	17	5	1	0	0	0	0	0
Criminal damage	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Intimidation	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withholding information	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possessing prohibited articles	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Law riot	3	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conspiracy to arm terrorists	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	648	316	88	101	46	27	20	8	4	38

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Tom King: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions for which I am responsible:

Category	Number
Departmental Government Offices	450
Storage buildings	2
Hospitals	86
Other health premises	480
Prisons	7
Training and recruitment establishments	22
Research institutions and laboratories	22

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its meritts. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances, and this may include a re-appraisal of Crown immunity. It is my intention that Northern Ireland will take similar action to England and Wales in relation to the removal of Crown immunity under the Food Act from health service premises.

There is a difference between food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation. Whereas the Food Hygiene Regulations do not apply on Crown premises, the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, for example, does so apply. The Crown is subject to notices similar in purpose to those issued to other bodies under the order and under which specified improvements can be required to be made. The Crown is, of course, immune from prosecution under either set of provisions.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming Methods

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the grants now available for farmers for purposes of improving the environment or using alternative sources of energy.

Mr. Jopling: The grants available under the agriculture improvement scheme are as follows:

Description	Rate of grant	
	Basic per cent.	LFA per cent.
Bracken control (other than soil cultivation)	15	30
Dykes—using materials traditional in the locality	30	60
Heather burning—or regenerating by cutting	15	30
Hedges	30	60
Manure stores for poultry (not integral with poultry house)	15	30
Shelter belts (with 50 per cent. or more of broadleaved trees)	30	60
Shelter belts (other)	15	30
Solar heating	15	30
Thermal insulation—agricultural use	15	30

Description	Rate of grant Basic per cent.	LFA per cent.
Walls—using materials traditional in the locality	30	60
Waste disposal (agricultural effluents and waste)	30	60
Wind/water powered pumps and generators	15	30

Purchasing Policy

Mr. Thurnham asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy on the purchases of goods and services for his Department; how he is monitoring its effectiveness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My Department is progressively adopting a more cost-effective purchasing stragegy, based on continuing studies by the internal team and commercial adviser to which I referred in my reply to my hon. Friend of 14 March 1985 at columns *266-7*. A full-time professional director of purchasing and supply is now being recruited; organisational and procedural changes designed to raise and sustain purchasing performance are being made; and monitoring techniques are being developed for the purpose of assessing progress towards the April 1987 value for money target prescribed in the Management and Personnel Office report entitled "Government Purchasing".

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Jopling: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions for which I am responsible:

Category by major use	Number
Central departmental offices	13
Regional or local offices	153
Storage buildings	123
Research institutions and laboratories	44

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances.

EC (Food Sales)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent special sales of surplus food and wine have been agreed by the management committee of the EEC; and if he will specify the amounts of food and wine and the sale prices, respectively, expressed in pence per pound.

Mr. Gummer: I will reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Nicholls asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) of 7 November 1985, *Official Report*, column 6, if he is now able to announce further details of the reduction expected in Agricultural Development and Advisory Service posts by the spring of 1987.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I believe that economies and improvements in the efficiency of ADAS are possible which will lead to savings of about 370 ADAS posts and some 80 non-ADAS posts, as foreshadowed in my statement of 7 November. It is envisaged that ADAS posts will be distributed as follows: agriculture service, 107; agricultural science service, 80; land and water service, 37; and the state veterinary service, at most 141. The figure for the veterinary service includes the result of two recent efficiency and organisational studies covering the veterinary investigation service and the organisation of the service at divisional level, which account together for 56 posts. The balance is subject to possible downward adjustment following reassessment of the revenue from certain schemes. Further details for each service have been placed in the Library of the House.

These economies cannot be achieved without redundancies, but every effort will be made to deal sympathetically with the problems of those who are displaced.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Secondary Schools (Plymouth)

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to announce his decision on the proposals submitted by Devon county council for the reorganisation of secondary schools in Plymouth.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend rejected these proposals on 25 February.

Mr. Fisher asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the proposals submitted to him by Devon county council for the reorganisation of secondary schools in Plymouth.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend received two delegations, one from parents and governors of Whitleigh school and the other from the county council, and also met the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen), 11 Statutory and 77 non-Statutory proposals were forwarded to him by the Devon local education authority.

Pupils (Achievements)

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to him to compare the achievements of pupils, and the cost of education, in selective and non-selective systems.

Mr. Dunn: Some information on the relative achievements of pupils in selective and non-selective schools is available from research studies, including

research into examination results for individual local education authorities published by the Department in "Statistical Bulletin 13/84". Following his announcement in the House on 14 November 1984, at column 697, my right hon. Friend is considering proposals for wider ranging research into the factors affecting performance in schools. Information on costs in individual schools or school systems is not available centrally.

Reading University

Sir Gerard Vaughan asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what level of funding was provided for Reading university by the University Grants Committee between 1978-79 and the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Walden: The total funding provided by the University Grants Committee to Reading university in the financial years 1978-79 to 1984-85 was as follows. The figures include recurrent, capital and equipment and furniture grant.

	£
1978-79	10,185,279
1979-80	12,225,290
1980-81	15,998,929
1981-82	17,194,224
1982-83	20,309,964
1983-84	21,858,900
1984-85	22,144,510

The figures are not comparable from year to year because of various changes in funding arrangements most notably adjustments made to reflect changes in the level of the home undergraduate tuition fee; provision for redundancy and restructuring costs and the progressive withdrawal from 1980-81 of the subsidy for overseas students.

Sixth Form Education

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of pupils in sixth forms at independent schools; what percentage this is of the total number of pupils in sixth forms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985 there were 66,084 pupils aged 16 years and over in independent schools in England. This represents 17·5 per cent. of all pupils aged 16 and over in maintained secondary and independent schools.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Sir Keith Joseph: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following premises for which I am responsible:

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	2
Regional and local offices	46

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, I will consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances. This may, as in the case of hospital catering, lead to a reappraisal of Crown immunity.

Teachers' Unions (Membership)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give the latest figures available to him for the membership of the National Union of Teachers and the Professional Association of Teachers, respectively, and indicate how many seats on the Burnham committee each of these bodies has.

Sir Keith Joseph: The gross membership of the National Union of Teachers and the Professional Association of Techers in December 1984 (the latest date for which I have figures for both unions) was 258,440 and 27,722 respectively. I have no later figure for the NUT, but I understand that the PAT's current gross membership is about 42,000. The NUT has 13 seats and the PAT one seat on the Burnham primary and secondary committee.

Teachers (Convictions)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how his Department tackles the problem arising from teachers convicted or charged with *(a)* sexual offences and *(b)* other offences against young persons.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Education (Teachers) Regulations 1982 (S.I. 1982/106) empower my right hon. Friend to bar or restrict the employment as teachers or workers with young people of persons determined by him to be unsuitable for such employment on grounds of their misconduct (whether or not evidenced by a conviction of a criminal offence). The procedures for dealing with such cases are described in the Department's "Administrative Memorandum 3/82", a copy of which is in the Library.

Schoolchildren (Bussing and Fare Arrangements)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) whether he will list his powers in respect of the bussing and fare arrangements of schoolchildren within and between local education authorities;

(2) what representations he has received in respect of the fare and bussing arrangements of children within and between local education authorities over the last year;

(3) what advice has been given by his Department to local education authorities in respect of their bussing and fare arrangements within and between local education authorities;

(4) if he will seek powers to co-ordinate policies in respect of bussing and fares for children travelling to school within and between local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: No such representations or advice have been received or given. My right hon. Friend has certain powers under section 55(1) of the Education Act 1944 and section 31 of the Education Act 1980, which may be relevant to the hon. Member's questions. My right hon. Friend does not intend to seek the powers suggested by the hon. Member.

GCSE

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will make a statement on the proposed merit and distinction awards for general certificate of secondary education candidates.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend announced on 14 November last year, at column 269, in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) that we intend to bring forward for consultation revised proposals for GCSE distinction and merit certificates and that it will therefore not be practicable for these to be introduced in 1988, the first year in which GCSE certificates will be awarded.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects the proposed grade-related criteria for the general certificate of secondary education to be introduced.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Secondary Examinations Council will be considering the responses to the draft grade criteria proposals in 10 subjects which it sent out for consultation in October last year. My right hon. Friend expects the Secondary Examinations Council to advise him on when it might be practicable to introduce grade criteria in particular subjects.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many schools have not yet received specimen examination papers for the general certificate of secondary education; and when he expects all schools to have received such papers.

Mr. Chris Patten: This information is not available to the Department. Draft GCSE syllabuses in many subjects have been available for some months. The Secondary Examinations Council announced on 18 February that 76 GCSE syllabuses had been approved and that it was on course to approve all syllabuses for which it was responsible by 30 April 1986. Other syllabuses fall to be approved by the GCSE examining groups, which will be concerned to make all approved syllabuses available to schools as quickly as possible.

Students (Statistics)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many students, other than those following teacher training courses, were in *(a)* church colleges and *(b)* other higher education colleges and polytechnics for each year since 1975.

Mr. Walden: The numbers of all year enrolments for 1978-1984 are given in the table. Corresponding data for the years 1975, 1976 and 1977 are not readily available in this form.

Students on Non-Teacher Training Courses: England

	1 November of each year	
	Voluntary Colleges	*Other HE Colleges and Polytechnics*
1978	8,600	264,000
1979	10,400	272,800
1980	11,600	288,600
1981	13,600	310,800
1982	14,600	325,400
1983	16,000	341,800
1984	16,000	349,100

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list in the *Official Report* the size of bids made by each local authority for capital expenditure in each of the last five years, together with the amounts finally granted, expressed at *(a)* outturn prices, *(b)* 1984-85 prices and *(c)* the percentage relationship of bid to allocation.

Mr. Dunn: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

University Grants Committee

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what are the terms of reference of the review by Lord Croham of the University Grants Committee; when its report is expected to be completed; if it will be published; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has any plans to strengthen the role and powers of the University Grants Committee; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The terms of reference of the review of the UGC, as originally announced on 25 July last, at column 641, are:

> To review, within the context of expected developments in higher education, the University Grants Committee's constitutional position and role in relation to the Government and to the universities, its membership, its internal structure and working methods, and its secretariat.

Since then, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland announced on 9 December last, at columns 460-61, the review committee has also been asked to consider, in relation to its existing terms of reference, the implications of adopting the recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council (Cmnd. 9676) concerning the planning and funding of higher education in Scotland having regard in particular to the concern expressed in the STEAC report that continued access by the Scottish universities to a United Kingdom based peer review system would be desirable.

The committee has been asked to report in the autumn of 1986. The committee's report will be published. I am sending the hon. Member a copy of a letter from my right hon. Friend to the chairman of the committee, Lord Croham, which was published on 17 September last.

My right hon. Friends will consider the role and functions of the UGC in the light of the report of the review committee when it is available.

TRANSPORT

Commissioners of Irish Lights

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the names of the commissioners of Irish Lights and identify which come from Northern Ireland, Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland respectively.

Mr. Ridley: I understand that the commissioners are:

L. D. G. Collen, BA, MAI, FIEI
V. A. Cooke, OBE, MA, FIMechE, DL
H. P. Coveney, FRICS, TD
The Hon. T. R. V. Dixon, MBE, DL
J. Gore-Grimes, BA, LLB
P. H. Greer, MAI, FIEE, FIEI
J. H. Guinness (Chairman)
J. P. Jameson
Rt. Hon. Lord Mayor Ald. J. Tunney TD
M. W. S. Maclaran, BA
M. Manning, TD
Rt. Hon. The Earl of Meath
Commodore L. S. Moloney
M. O'Halloran
M. A. O'Neill
Richie Ryan, MEP
J. Stafford
T. Sheppard
R. R. Stewart, MA
Captain A. C. Tupper, DSC, RN (Vice-Chairman)

I do not appoint the commissioners. I do not have the information as to which country they "come from"—which is itself an imprecise question.

Air Services (Liberalisation)

Mr. Cockeram asked the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives his Department is taking to seek to liberalise air services on international long-haul routes and particularly routes to the Far East.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Government's policy was set out in the White Paper "Airline Competition Policy", which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State presented to Parliament in October 1984. In accordance with this policy my Department is seeking to liberalise air services wherever possible—where foreign competition is fair and Britain's interests are not prejudiced.

Lockheed Aircraft Co.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has held discussions with representatives of the Lockheed Aircraft Company about industrial development on any airport in Britain by that company.

Mr. Michael Spicer: No.

Vehicles (Construction and Use Regulations)

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether vehicles which have an EEC type approval certificate are required to conform with United Kingdom construction and use regulations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There is no European Community type approval scheme for complete motor vehicles. Directives specify requirements for individual vehicles systems or components. Vehicles having systems or components which are certified as complying with the requirements of a directive are exempt, as far as those systems or components are concerned, from comparable construction requirements in the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1978. Vehicle users are not, however, exempt from the obligation to ensure that their vehicles are maintained in good and efficient working order.

Roads (London)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the consultants' reports on road improvement to London's major road network, including the south circular and the link between Shepherd's Bush and Cheyne walk.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Consultants are carrying out assessment studies for us on the traffic related problems in four traffic corridors of London. I hope to be able to publish their reports later this year as a first step towards considering what measures would be appropriate. Work is also proceeding on the examination of a possible relief road for the Earls Court one-way system. It is too early to say when this might produce results.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department has asked for road improvements for cyclists and pedestrians to be included in London boroughs' current transport and TPP submissions.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Our forthcoming circular to local authorities about their transport policies and programme submissions will, like last year's circular, encourage them to continue to provide facilities for cyclists and to enhance pedestrian safety.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department's cost-benefit analysis for road improvements will be extended to include assessment of accident savings to pedestrians and cyclists.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The accident rates, severities and costs used in the Department's cost-benefit analysis for road improvements already include pedestrian and cyclist casualties. The assessment of the benefits of switching traffic from a road through a built-up area to a bypass include any benefits arising from reduced pedestrian and cyclist casualties.

Cycle Schemes

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department will be willing to take over the funding of cycle schemes designed by the Greater London council cycle project team.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. It will be for boroughs to decide what is appropriate in their areas.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has for replacing the work of the Greater London council's cycle project team.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: London boroughs are already responsible for road safety in their areas. That will apply to the roads they take over from the GLC on 1 April. The Department will continue to provide information, help and advice to local authorities in developing practical measures to help cyclists.

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will make separate funds available for cycle schemes on major and minor roads of an innovatory and non-innovatory nature.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Special funds are already available from the Department for suitable innovatory cycle schemes. Purely local schemes are the responsibility of the local highway authorities along with their other traffic and road safety measures and funded in the same way.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if it is intended that pedal cycles, motor cycles and three wheel powered vehicles will be carried on the Channel tunnel shuttle trains at reduced fares.

Mr. David Mitchell: It is for the Channel Tunnel Group—France-Manche to decide on tariff levels and on the categories of vehicle to be carried by the shuttle trains.

Railways (Manchester)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has received from the British Railways board for the discontinuance of railway passenger services in the Greater Manchester area in the last 12 months; and what response he has made in each case.

Mr. David Mitchell: None.

Autocrime

Mr. Brandon-Bravo asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures are proposed to help combat the international trade in stolen vehicles.

Mr. Michael Spicer: My Department has recently concluded an agreement with the registration authorities of the Federal Republic of Germany for the bilateral exchange of information about used vehicles which are imported or exported between the two countries.

From 1 March, motorists with West German registered vehicles seeking to registr them in Britain will need to surrender their West German registration documents. These will be cancelled and returned to the Federal Republic for checks to identify stolen vehicles and forged documents. A similar scheme will be introduced from the same date for British registered vehicles entering West Germany.

These arrangements will not only help to limit the movement of stolen vehicles between the two countries, but will improve the accuracy of the records held at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Centre.

Negotiations with other European countries for similar agreements are now in hand and I shall be making further announcements in due course.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the categories, and numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Ridley: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions-premises for which I am responsible.

Category	*Number*
Headquarters London offices	10
Regional and local offices	710
Storage buildings	25
Training establishments	1
Research establishments	4
Coastguard lookout posts/cottages	625
	1,375

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

I have no plans for changing the situation.

WALES

Welsh Water Authority

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what account he took of future capital expenditure financed from revenues of the Welsh water authority in determining the authority's external financing limit for 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In determining the Welsh water authority's external financing limit for 1986-87 my right hon. Friend took full account of the authority's proposed capital expenditure plans and the internal resources available to fund them.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the number of people in Wales *(a)* under the age of 30 years, *(b)* under the age of 40 years and *(c)* over the age of 40 years who have been unemployed for one year or more.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: In January 1985 there were 32,399 people in Wales under 30 years of age who had been unemployed for over 52 weeks. The corresponding figures for those aged over 30 but less than 40, and those aged 40 and over, were 17,197 and 28,418 respectively.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the categories, and numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions-premises for which I am responsible.

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	1
Regional or local offices	44
Storage buildings	6
Hospitals and other health premises	*175
Research institutions and laboratories†	5

* Approximate
† Not forming part of institutions included above

These figures include premises where Crown immunity from food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out. It would be possible to identify such premises separately only at disproportionate cost.

The right hon. Gentleman will be aware of Government plans to legislate to remove Crown immunity under the Food Hygiene Regulations from health authorities. Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances.

Homesteading

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement as to the number of units homesteaded in Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Although homesteading is one of the housing options available in Wales, local authorities have not applied for any such schemes during the last five years.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what radioactive substances were discharged into the atmosphere from Trawsfynydd nuclear power station on 21 February;

(2) what were the environmental consequences of the incident at Trawsfynydd nuclear power station on 21 February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is estimated that 15 tonnes of carbon dioxide were released containing small amounts of sulphur 35, tritium, manganese 56 and cobolt 60.

Apart from one speck of contaminated material found during monitoring off site, samples taken to date reveal no unusual activity. Further sampling off site continues.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Eggar: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions-premises for which my right hon. and learned Friend is responsible:

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	19
Regional and local offices	14
Storage buildings	2
Research institutions	9
Training establishments	1

These figures include premises where Crown immunity from food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its own merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, we shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances.

Paraguay

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the programme for the Paraguayan Foreign Minister's visit to Britain from 4 to 7 March.

Mr. Eggar: I shall arrange for a copy of the programme, which will be printed shortly, to be sent to the hon. Member as soon as it is available.

BBC External Services

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the Government have taken on the Report of the review of the BBC external services which was published on 4 February 1985.

Mr. Eggar: We have had intensive discussions with the BBC since the report was published in February 1985. A wide measure of agreement has been reached with the BBC on the report's recommendations, including agreement on the central proposal for multi-annual funding. The Government believe that the report provides a firm foundation for the future development of the external services and that implementation of the report's recommendations, on which considerable progress has already been made, will lead to real improvements in the efficiency and economy with which the external services are run.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Chief Police Officers

Mr. Soley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his reply of 10 February, *Official Report*, column 314, how many times he met the presidents of the Association of Chief Police Officers between March 1984 and March 1985.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A precise record is not available, but it is thought that my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary may have met the two chief constables who were successively president of ACPO between 10 and 20 times during the year in question.

Police Complaints Procedure

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what entitlement a complainant under the police complaints procedure has to see the report of the police on the substance of his or her complaint.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Complainants are informed of the outcome of an investigation of a complaint — for example, whether or not criminal or disciplinary charges have been preferred. In cases where the investigation has been supervised by the Police Complaints Authority the authority is required, where practicable, to send the complainant a copy of its statement indicating whether or not it is satisfied with the conduct of the investigation and of any respects in which it is not so satisfied. There is no

entitlement for complainants to be shown the report itself of the police investigation into their complaint, and the courts have accepted the importance of protecting the confidentiality of information offered in the course of such an inquiry.

Animals (Experiments)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the trend in LD50 tests as a percentage of all acute toxicity tests since 1977; and if it remains his policy that LD50 tests will continue to be monitored closely.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the numbers of LD50 tests carried out is not available as LD50 tests are not identified separately from other acute toxicity tests in the current returns on statistics of experiments performed on living animals. However, the total number of acute toxicity tests has fallen by nearly 30 per cent. between 1977 and 1984, and it is likely that the number of LD50 tests fell at an even faster rate. Scientific opinion is moving in the direction of even further reductions in the number of LD50 tests, and the Government encourage their replacement by other forms of toxicity test wherever possible. It remains the policy of my right hon. Friend to monitor closely the use of animals in acute toxicity testing. It is our intention that the new statistical return we shall introduce to reflect the new system of controls in the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill will identify LD50 tests separately. The project licensing system proposed under the Bill will substantially extend my right hon. Friend's control over the number of these tests.

Police Establishments

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the establishments and actual strengths of each police force in England and Wales at the latest available dates; and if he will express both as proportions of the population of each country.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

Police Force	*Authorised Establishment on 31 December 1985*	*Strength on 31 December 1985*	*Population of force area (Mid-1984)*	*Population per officer Based on Establishment*	*Based on Strength*
Avon and Somerset	3,020	2,965	1,381,000	457	466
Bedfordshire	1,000	982	516,000	516	525
Cambridgeshire	1,140	1,141	609,000	534	534
Cheshire	1,845	1,803	937,000	508	520
Cleveland	1,474	1,461	563,000	382	385
Cumbria	1,128	1,120	484,000	429	432
Derbyshire	1,767	1,765	912,000	516	517
Devon and Cornwall	2,739	2,747	1,417,000	517	516
Dorset	1,203	1,202	618,000	514	514
Durham	1,357	1,293	604,000	445	467
Dyfed Powys	934	924	446,000	478	483
Essex	2,673	2,678	1,427,000	534	533
Gloucestershire	1,164	1,151	509,000	437	442
Greater Manchester	6,943	6,779	2,588,000	373	382
Gwent	978	971	440,000	450	453
Hampshire	3,084	3,068	1,630,000	529	531
Hertfordshire	1,578	1,584	835,000	529	527
Humberside	1,972	1,936	852,000	432	440
Kent	2,875	2,859	1,492,000	519	522
Lancashire	3,158	3,004	1,379,000	437	459
Leicestershire	1,733	1,750	866,000	500	495
Lincolnshire	1,183	1,141	557,000	471	488
Merseyside	4,607	4,554	1,491,000	324	327
Norfolk	1,278	1,263	715,000	559	566
Northamptonshire	1,031	1,017	540,000	524	531
Northumbria	3,378	3,368	1,443,000	427	428
North Wales	1,316	1,251	629,000	478	503
North Yorkshire	1,368	1,353	691,000	505	511
Nottinghamshire	2,259	2,214	1,000,000	443	452
South Wales	3,109	3,064	1,293,000	416	422
South Yorkshire	2,872	2,850	1,305,000	454	458
Staffordshire	2,104	2,102	1,019,000	484	485
Suffolk	1,136	1,131	616,000	542	545
Surrey	1,626	1,627	779,000	479	479
Sussex	2,830	2,790	1,362,000	481	488
Thames Valley	3,317	3,283	1,866,000	563	568
Warwickshire	925	939	478,000	517	509
West Mercia	1,953	1,924	1,032,000	528	536
West Midlands	6,684	6,555	2,647,000	396	404
West Yorkshire	5,154	5,049	2,056,000	399	407
Wiltshire	1,045	1,028	536,000	513	521
Total	92,940	91,686	42,560,000	458	464
City of London	798	782	5,000	6	6
Metropolitan	27,165	26,705	7,202,000	265	270

Police Force	Authorised Establishment on 31 December 1985	Strength on 31 December 1985	Population of force area (Mid-1984)	Population per officer Based on Establishment	Based on Strength
Grand Total	120,90[illegible]	119,173	49,767,000	412	418

Prison Officers

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department why his Department is again looking into the possibilities of alternative shift patterns for prison officers; when his Department last looked at this matter; and what was the outcome of that review.

Mr. Mellor: The Prison Department is looking into the possibilities of alternative shift patterns because it believes that the present systems do not lead to the most effective and efficient deployment of prison officers. A draft common working agreement between the Prison Department and the Prison Officers Association was finalised in November 1982 after a lengthy period of negotiation. In 1984 the department concluded, after local consultations about its application at each Prison Department establishment, that the draft agreement did not meet the requirements of the prison service for the best possible use of its staff.

Police Establishments

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the figures for the authorised establishment of the Wiltshire constabulary for the years 1983 to 1986; what was the actual strength of the force in each year; and if he will express both figures as a proportion of the population of the county.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

Wiltshire Constabulary

On 31 December	*Authorised Establishment*	*Strength*	*Population of force area*	*Population per officer Based on Establishment*	*Based on Strength*
1983	1,042	1,030	528,000	507	513
1984	1,042	1,029	532,000	511	517
1985	1,045	1,028	536,000	513	521

Prisoners (Bail)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners sent to prison on remand, have been granted bail after having been in prison for less than 48 hours, one week, two weeks, three weeks and four weeks in 1985.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Prisons (Race Relations Officers)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of race relations liaison officers employed in prisons in the United Kingdom; what training they are given, and by whom; and if their employment in this position is full-time.

Mr. Mellor: All prison service establishments in England and Wales have designated at least one member of staff as race relations liaison officer. Formal training is provided in a specialist residential course of two weeks' duration run by the prison service college. There are no full-time liaison officer posts.

Prisoners (Money)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the policy of his Department as to the transfer of money belonging to a prisoner when a prisoner is moved to another prison; and what is the average time that it takes for such money to be transferred.

Mr. Mellor: Any money due to an inmate who is being transferred is normally forwarded to the new establishment, usually by first-class post, on the day of transfer. No central record is kept of the time taken to transfer such moneys and this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind, I would be glad to look into it.

Prisons (Paper Work)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken by his Department to reduce the amount of duplicated paper work in prisons.

Mr. Mellor: All staff concerned have been encouraged to make a special and conscious effort to reduce the demand for photocopying to the minimum necessary for the effective discharge of business. If the hon. Member has any particular matter in mind I shall be glad to look into it.

Immigration

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether it is his intention to expand the categories of persons eligible for settlement listed in paragraph 133 of the immigration rules to include further categories; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: We have no such intention at present, but we have undertaken to consider an amendment to add to the categories listed in paragraph 133 of the immigration rules when a suitable opportunity arises.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons in each of the categories listed in paragraph 133 *(a)* to *(f)* of the immigration rules have been refused settlement in each of the last 10 years, showing for each category the grounds for refusal.

Mr. Waddington: Such information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many stops were effected in immigration cases by Members of the House of Lords in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Waddington: Relevant information is available only for Heathrow, terminal 3 and refers to those cases where removal is deferred following refusal of leave to enter. This information is as follows:

	Number
1981	66
1982	54
1983	60
1984	38
1985	25

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions his Department had with representatives of immigration officers or their unions prior to or during the preparation of the draft guidelines on the handling of representations by Members in immigration cases.

Mr. Waddington: I met members of the executive committee of the Immigration Service Union at their request on 17 October 1985. They expressed concern at the increase in operational pressures which had occurred last year, including the increase in the number of cases attracting representations from right hon. and hon. Members. Officials of the Home Office have also had meetings with representatives both of the Immigration Service Union and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (Immigration Branch), which also represents some immigration officers, when the increase in the number of cases attracting representations was also discussed.

Both unions were sent copies of the draft guidelines after they had been placed in the Library on 11 February; neither was consulted about the draft guidelines before that date.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to abolish Crown immunity in prison hospitals.

Mr. Mellor: No.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Mellor: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions for which we are responsible:

	Number
Central departmental offices	11
Regional offices	147
Storage buildings	39
Prisons	121
Training and recruitment establishments	15
Research institutions and laboratories	12

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider each category of institution on its own merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, we shall consider how best to deal with them.

Metropolitan Police (Civilian Personnel)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civilians are employed in police control rooms in the Metropolitan area; what grades and rates of pay apply to those on operational duties; and what similar information he has for other police forces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand that there are 51 civilians employed in Metropolitan police control rooms —31 clerical officers, 12 specialist teleprinter operators and eight wireless telegraphists. Their rates of pay are as follows:

Clerical Officer
Junior scale £3,149 (age 16)—£4,371 (age 20)
Main scale £4,800—£6,293

Specialist Teleprinter Operator
Junior scale £3,274 (age 16)—£4,970 (age 21)
Main scale £5,384—£7,077

Wireless Telegraphist
£6,431—£8,018

Each grade receives in addition a 20 per cent. shift disturbance allowance and, where appropriate, London weighting allowance.

Comparable information for other police forces in England and Wales is not readily available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The employment of police civilians on particular duties is a matter for decision locally following consultations between the police authority, the chief officer of police and the staff associations. The pay and conditions of service of police civilians in these forces are negotiated in the national joint council for local authorities' administrative, professional, technical and clerical services, in which central Government have no locus.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of civilians employed in the Metropolitan police; if he will give a breakdown between main functions; and what similar information he has for other police forces.

Mr. Giles Shaw: On 31 December 1985 there were 12,680 full-time and 917 part-time members of the Metropolitan police civil staff. The civil staff who operate in support of the police encompass a wide range of disciplines, specialisms and skills. They include administrative, professional, technical, clerical and industrial staff.

On 31 December 1985 there were 23,457 full-time and 5,197 part-time civilian staff in police forces outside the Metropolitan police in England and Wales. The range of work on which they are employed is similar to that in the Metropolitan police.

Appendix 7 to the annual published report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary shows the numbers of full-time and part-time civilian staff in the categories clerical, technical and domestic, in each police force in England and Wales other than the Metropolitan police.

News International Plant, Wapping

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis as to whether

officers from the special patrol group have been deployed during the present police operation at the News International plant in Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that officers of the special patrol group were deployed at Wapping on 13 and 15 February.

Housing (Fire Escapes)

Mr. Hayward asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to pubish national guidance on means of escape from fire in houses in multiple occupation.

Mr. Hurd: In conjunction with the Department of the Environment and the Welsh Office, my Department has prepared draft guidance setting out a national advisory standard for means of escape from fire and related fire safety measures in certain houses in multiple occupation to aid consultation between housing and fire authorities required under housing legislation. Copies of the draft guide, on which written comments are invited by 11 April 1986 are being sent to the local authority associations and to other interested bodies and individuals. Copies have also been placed in the Library. Further copies can be obtained on request in writing from the Home Office Fire and Emergency Planning Department, Room 916, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AT. Subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise, my right. hon. Friends and I hope to be able to publish the final version of the guide during 1986.

SCOTLAND

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the categories; and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. John MacKay: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions—premises for which my right hon. and learned Friend is responsible:

	Number
Central departmental offices	142
Hospitals and other health premises	500
Courts	52
Penal establishments	20
Training establishments	2
Research institutions and laboratories	8
Historic Buildings and Monuments	332
Colleges of education and central institutions	20
Museum, gallery, library, botanic garden and civil defence premises	7

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply, but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, my right hon. and learned Friend will consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances. In the case of hospital catering, my right hon. and learned Friend has recently announced the proposed removal of Crown immunity.

Scottish Universities (Funding)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland which organisations and individuals he proposes to consult on the recommendations of the Scottish tertiary education advisory committee for the future funding of Scottish universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The answer given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger) to my hon. Friend the Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Corrie) on Monday 9 December 1985, at column *460*, contained an open invitation to interested parties to submit comments on the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council's report by Thursday 27 March 1986. In addition, the Scottish Education Department wrote on Tuesday 10 December to the following organisations:

Aberdeen University
Dundee University
Edinburgh University
Glasgow University
Heriot-Watt University
St. Andrews University
Stirling University
Strathclyde University

Scottish Business School
The Open University

Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, Dundee
Dundee College of Technology
East of Scotland College of Agriculture, Edinburgh
Edinburgh College of Art
Glasgow College of Technology
Glasgow School of Art
Leith Nautical College, Edinburgh
Napier College of Commerce and Technology
North of Scotland College of Agriculture, Aberdeen
Paisley College of Technology
Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh
Robert Gordon's Institute of Technology, Aberdeen
Scottish College of Textiles, Galashiels
The Queen's College, Glasgow
The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow
West of Scotland Agricultural College, Auchincruive

Aberdeen College of Education
Craigie College of Education, Ayr
Dundee College of Education
Dunfermline College of Physical Education, Edinburgh
Jordanhill College of Education, Glasgow
Moray House College of Education, Edinburgh
St. Andrew's College of Education, Bearsden

Borders Regional Council
Central Regional Council
Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council
Fife Regional Council
Grampian Regional Council
Highland Regional Council
Lothian Regional Council
Orkney Islands Council
Shetland Islands Council
Strathclyde Regional Council
Tayside Regional Council
Western Isles Islands Council

Association of Colleges of Further and Higher Education (Scottish Branch)
Association of Directors of Education in Scotland
Association of Principals of Colleges (Scottish Branch)
Committee of Principals and Directors of Central Institutions
Committee of Principals of Colleges of Education
Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals of Universities
Council of the Scottish Agricultural Colleges

Joint Committee of Colleges of Education in Scotland
Standing Committee of the Scottish Universities

Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians
Association of Higher Academic Staff in Colleges of Education in Scotland
Association of Lecturers in College of Education in Scotland
Association of Lecturers in Scottish Central Institutions Section of the Educational Institute of Scotland
Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs
Association of University Teachers (Scotland)
Educational Institute of Scotland
National and Local Government Officers' Association
National Union of Public Employees
National Union of Students
Scottish Further Education Association
Scottish Trades Union Congress
Transport and General Workers Union

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council for National Academic Awards
General Teaching Council for Scotland
National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education
Scottish Council for Educational Technology
Scottish Council of Independent Schools
Scottish Council for Research in Education
Scottish Council for the Validation of Courses for Teachers
Scottish Examination Board
Scottish Universities Council on Entrance
Scottish Vocational Education Council
University Grants Committee
Wales Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education

Scottish Community Education Council
Scottish Institute of Adult Education
Universities Council for Adult and Continuing Education (Scotland)
Advisory Council for the Arts in Scotland

Advisory Board for the Research Councils
Agricultural and Food Research Council
Economic and Social Research Council
Medical Research Council
Natural Environment Research Council
Science and Engineering Research Council

British Academy
Royal Society
Royal Society of Edinburgh

Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
Confederation of British Industry (Scotland)
Scottish Council (Development and Industry)
Scottish Development Agency
Manpower Services Commission
Manpower Services Commission Office for Scotland

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what mechanism is proposed for the consideration of representations about the recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council in relation to the future funding of Scottish universities; by what date such representations need to be submitted in order to be taken into account in any decisions reached on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Decisions on the recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council in relation to the future arrangements for the funding of Scottish universities will be taken by my right hon. and learned Friend in consultation with his Cabinet colleagues. Comments on the recommendations have been sought by Tuesday 27 March 1986.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has solicited or proposes to solicit the views of Scottish universities about the recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council in relation to the future funding of Scottish universities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The Scottish universities have been consulted on the recommendations of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council and my right hon. and learned Friend and I await their response with interest.

Housing

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what grants have been allocated by his Department to the Inverclyde district council in each of the past five years for housing improvement projects: and what spending constraints have been imposed on Inverclyde district council during the past five years.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1986, c. 590]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 28 January. The amounts spent on the improvement of the council's own housing stock and on improvement and repairs grants to the private sector are dependent on the council's own priorities for expenditure within the HRA and non-HRA capital expenditure blocks respectively. The Government contribute towards the costs incurred by local authorities in giving private sector improvement and repairs grants. The amounts so contributed in the case of Inverclyde district council during the past five years were as follows:

	Improvement	*Repairs*	*Total*
1981-82	256,446	25,868	282,314
1982-83	327,774	89,092	416,866
1983-84	470,573	617,257	1,087,830
1984-85	690,415	383,605	1,074,020
1985-86	629,163	651,460	1,280,623
	2,374,371	1,767,282	4,141,653

DEFENCE

Royal Marines

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current minimum height requirement for recruitment to the Royal Marines.

Mr. Lee: The minimum height requirement for Royal Marine officers is 165 centimetres and for Royal Marine other ranks varies from 154·9 centimetres to 165·1 centimetres according to the branch and whether or not the junior entry is involved. Full details for officers and ranks are published in career regulations which are available at careers information offices.

Science Studentships

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence what Scottish secondary educational qualifications are required for those seeking science studentships funded by his Department.

Mr. Lee: The MOD student scientist scheme provides pre-recruitment sponsorship of undergraduates who may, on graduation, be appointed as Civil Servants in the

science class. In Scotland, the minimum secondary educational qualifications required for such sponsorships are three higher Scottish certificates of education in relevant subjects.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Lee: Crown immunity from prosecution under food legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following MOD institutions-premises:

Category	*Number*
Headquarters departmental offices	23
Other office locations	44
Military locations (which may in some cases contain several establishments)	*1,000
Hospitals	8
Rehabilitation centres	1
Dockyards	2
Factories	2
Research and development establishments†	7

* Approximate.
† But buildings and satellites are spread over 45 locations.

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out. It is MOD policy that catering establishments on its premises should meet the hygiene standards laid down in the regulations and to this end there is a stringent system of in-house inspections to ensure that standards are met. The MOD is not exempt from the Health and Safety At Work etc Act 1974, although it is immune from prosecution under that Act. It is MOD policy to ensure compliance with the legislation and to achieve standards at least as high as those required by law. However, certain exemptions from inspection under the Act are sometimes obtained on the grounds of operational necessity and national security. If I have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall certainly consider how best to deal with them.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether *(a)* full-time or *(b)* part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are permitted to be members of the Ulster clubs;

(2) whether *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are permitted also to be members of the Orange Order;

(3) whether *(a)* full-time or *(b)* part-time members of the Ulster Defence Regiment are permitted also to be members of the Ulster Defence Association.

Mr. Lee: In the same way as other members of the armed forces, all UDR personnel are required to observe the restrictions on political activity laid down in Queen's Regulations and the UDR regulations. These preclude taking an active part in the affairs of any political organisation or party. Members are also required to avoid involvement in any activity which could bring the regiment into disrepute.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish in the *Official Report* the procedures followed by his Department following a complaint by a member of the public against a member or members of the Ulster Defence Regiment in the performance of their duties.

Mr. Lee: The procedure for investigating complaints from members of the public concerning the behaviour of any member of Her Majesty's forces in Northern Ireland including the UDR, is described in a recently produced information leaflet which is widely available from RUC stations and Army units. A copy of this leaflet has been placed in the Library.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints his Department received of conduct of members of the Ulster Defence Regiment by battalion operating area, indicating which area, for each of the last five years, and indicating how many led to disciplinary action against the member of the Ulster Defence Regiment involved and what action was taken.

Mr. Lee: The information is not available in the form requested. However, available records show that in 1985 the number of complaints received against UDR personnel accused of misconduct of a non-criminal nature, broken down into individual battalions, was as follows:

	Number of Complaints
1/9 UDR	3
2 UDR	1
3 UDR	8
4 UDR	13
5 UDR	0
6 UDR	1
7/10 UDR	9
8 UDR	2
11 UDR	4

ENVIRONMENT

"Competition in the Provision of Local Services"

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to bring forward legislation following consultation on the White Paper "Competition in the Provision of Local Services".

Mrs. Rumbold: It remains the Government's intention to extend compulsory competition and separate accounting to a wider range of local authority services as soon as a legislative opportunity becomes available.

Manchester (Rate Support Grant)

Mr. Silvester asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the rate support grant paid or to be paid to Manchester in each of the years from 1976-77 to 1986-87, inclusive, in real terms.

Mrs. Rumbold: The rate support grant figures for the metropolitan district of Manchester are shown below in constant 1984-85 prices:

	£ million 1984-85 prices
(1) 1976-77 to 1980-81	
1976-77	183·4
1977-78	176·4
1978-79	179·4
1979-80	171·0
1980-81	168·8
(2) 1981-82 to 1986-87	
1981-82	134·3
1982-83	108·2
1983-84	105·8
1984-85	96·0
1985-86	93·8
1986-87	*98·7

* Settlement estimate.

The figures for 1976-77 to 1980-81 are not comparable with those for 1981-82 to 1986-87 because:

(i) they comprise the needs, resources and domestic elements whereas from 1981-82 onwards the figures comprise block grant and domestic rate relief grant;

(ii) grant in support of services provided by metropolitan county councils was paid to the districts up to 1980-81 and to the counties thereafter.

The 1986-87 figure includes block grant in respect of responsibilities inherited from the Greater Manchester metropolitan county council.

The figures for 1976-77 to 1982-83 are final entitlements; for 1983-84 and 1984-85, domestic rate relief grant entitlements are final but block grant entitlements are provisional; for 1985-86 and 1986-87 block grant entitlements are based respectively on the council's budget and the expenditure estimate used for the rate support grant settlement, and domestic rate relief grant entitlements are also provisional.

The figures have been expressed in constant prices by using the GDP deflator.

Special Development Orders

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many special development orders have been granted in the five years to January; and how many of these were given in respect of public limited companies.

Mr. Tracey: Since January 1981, eight special development orders have been made in England. Unless a planning permission provides otherwise, it runs with the land. None of the permissions granted by these orders is confined to specified public limited companies.

Council House Building

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each London borough *(a)* the total starts and completions of council dwellings between 1979 and 1984, *(b)* the total sales of council dwellings between 1979 and 1984 and *(c)* the recorded levels of homelessness in each borough in 1979 and 1984.

Sir George Young: The numbers of house building starts and completions reported by each of the London boroughs for 1979 appear in issue 59 of "London Housing Statistics", for the years 1980 to 1983 in issue 73 and for 1984 in issue 74. Reported numbers of households accepted as homeless during 1979 are in issue 54 and during 1984 in issues 72 and 74. Copies of these publications are in the Library.

Following are the total sales of council dwellings reported by authorities in London for the period April 1979 to March 1985:

Total sales of council dwellings in London April 1979 to March 1985

	Number
Greater London Council	15,065
City of London	635
Barking and Dagenham	4,989
Barnet	2,995
Bexley	1,896
Brent	*1,096
Bromley	3,597
Camden	450
Croydon	3,515
Ealing	*3,453
Enfield	3,159
Greenwich	1,922
Hackney	*412
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,375
Haringey	1,552
Harrow	1,316
Havering	4,431
Hillingdon	*3,599
Hounslow	1,965
Islington	*742
Kensington and Chelsea	527
Kingston upon Thames	1,201
Lambeth	*1,024
Lewisham	*1,770
Merton	2,656
Newham	*2,794
Redbridge	2,252
Richmond upon Thames	1,183
Southwark	1,170
Sutton	1,598
Tower Hamlets	*472
Waltham Forest	*1,838
Wandsworth	7,006
Westminster	*982

* Reports of sales incomplete

Royal Parks (Motor Vehicles)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the numbers of motor vehicles and motor cycles officially used in royal parks and for what purposes; and how their numbers and functions compare with those of 1966 and 1976.

Mr. Tracey: Figures are not available for years before 1976. The numbers of official motor vehicles and motor cycles used in the royal parks in 1976 and 1986 are set out below, together with their broad functions. The figures do not include the Metropolitan police vehicles used for policing Hyde park.

	1976	1986
Parks vehicles		
Estate cars/cars for management staff	9	15
Small vans for carriage of personnel and small tools	16	9
Lorries for carriage of large loads/machinery	17	23
Land Rovers for non-roads use, gamekeeping and a fire tender	13	10
Royal parks constabulary		
Estate car	1	1
Personnel carriers/dog carriers	10	16

	1976	1986
Land Rovers	4	1
Motor cycles for patrol work	9	8
TOTAL	79	83

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of the change in rate support grant for Northamptonshire, he will state his Department's calculation of the percentage increase in rates they would produce, on the assumption that the county council budgets to spend at a level which maximises its rate support grant.

Mrs. Rumbold: If all authorities spend at the level assumed in the RSG settlement, the rate in the pound Northamptonshire are assumed for grant purposes to raise from ratepayers increases by 2·5 per cent. over the 1985-86 county precept. To maximise their block grant entitlement, Northamptonshire would need to reduce expenditure until grant allocation equalled expenditure. For 1986-87 this would mean spending at about £127 million.

Mr. Snape asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has refused to meet a delegation from the metropolitan borough of Sandwell to discuss the rate support grant allocation for 1985-86, as requested by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East.

Mrs. Rumbold: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I should be glad to meet a delegation from the metropolitan borough of Sandwell on my right hon. Friend's behalf.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Sir George Young: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions/premises for which my right hon. Friend is responsible.

Category	*Number of Department/ Environment (other than PSA)*	*PSA*
Central departmental offices	8	13
Regional or local offices	98	225
Storage buildings	3	32
Training and recruitment establishments	*1	—
Research establishments and laboratories	6	—

* (Serves PSA as well).

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

The Property Services Agency has responsibilities not only as an occupant of buildings but as provider and manager of accommodation for Government. It must ensure that the buildings it makes available to its clients for occupation meet statutory requirements. Once the buildings are in use responsibility is shared between the agency, the occupying departments and their staff. In the case of leased buildings the landlord may also have some responsibility.

Government policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its merits. If my right hon. Friend has evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances, where he has responsibility, he will consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with the situation.

Subsidence (Wednesbury)

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial resources he will make available to Sandwell metropolitan council to assist those householders in Wednesbury whose homes are being affected by subsidence caused by abandoned limestone mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: A variety of possible remedial measures for the Cowpasture mine, Wednesbury, are currently being considered by the expert panel appointed to advise the Secretary of State for the Environment on black country limestone matters. Consideration is being given to the most appropriate and cost effective solution to the problem commensurate with land use and property protection considerations, including privately owned housing.

My right hon. Friend cannot yet say what solution will be adopted. The advisory panel will be reporting to him on this issue shortly and he will give full and careful consideration to their recommendations.

However, financial assistance to householders whose property may be affected by subsidence, is a matter more appropriate to the insurance market which exists to cover such eventualities. In the meantime, the Department continues to fund approved ongoing monitoring of the old mines and further investigation works and urgent remedial works in the area through the derelict land grant programme.

Over £4 million has already been approved by the Department for monitoring, investigation and remedial works in the black country as a whole. Resources of £5 million earmarked for schemes in 1986-87 are significantly higher than the allocation of £3·1 million for 1985-86.

Dog Licences

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the amount of tax collected from dog licences for the years 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mrs. Rumbold: This information is only available for financial years. The revenue raised from licences issued through post offices in England and Wales in each of the past six years is:

	£000
1979-80	1,012
1980-81	1,001
1981-82	939
1982-83	907
1983-84	867
1984-85	948

Homesteading

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement as to the number of units homesteaded in England in each of the years 1978 to 1982.

Sir George Young: The number of disposals by local authorities and new towns in England notified to us under homesteading schemes in 1980-81 was 1,440, and 1,720 in 1981-82. Figures are not available for earlier years.

Tower Wharf

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will allow cycle access to Tower wharf during all hours of opening for a trial period of six months.

Mr. Tracey: No. Tower wharf is very heavily used by local residents and tourists, and cycling is therefore prohibited. Permission for cyclists to push or carry their cycles through this essentially pedestrian area is therefore restricted to those who are able to establish a particular case for regular access. I do not think it would be right to extend this, even for a trial period.

Regent's Park

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will allow cycle access to Regent's park during all hours of opening for a trial period of six months.

Mr. Tracey: Cycle access is already available to Regent's park via the outer circle, which is a park road from which trade vehicles are excluded.

Anti-fouling Paint

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps he is taking to advise chandlers and other sailing shops as to anti-fouling paint legislation; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what steps the Government is taking to see that anti-fouling paint is not available for purchase in shops throughout the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Control of Pollution (Anti-fouling Paint) Regulations 1985 came into force on 13 January 1986. The regulations limit the use of organotin compounds in anti-fouling paints supplied through retail outlets. Paint manufacturers in the United Kingdom have undertaken to supply, for retail sale, only paints which comply with the regulations.

Extensive consultation on the nature and content of the regulations took place during 1985. The large volume of correspondence arising from the consultation, and the publicity given to the subject, suggest that it is unlikely that any significant body of paint retailers remains ignorant of the actions proposed and subsequently taken by the Government. Copies of the regulations were sent to the associations representing the paint manufacturers and their customers well before the regulations came into force. Earlier this month the Department also wrote to associations representing the paint manufacturers and retail suppliers reminding them of the desirability of informing their members and customers about the requirements of the regulations.

The Department, jointly with the Welsh Office, will shortly issue a circular to local authorities in England and Wales giving guidance on the enforcement of the regulations. The local authority associations have agreed that Trading Standards Officers will monitor compliance and, where appropriate, will collect evidence which might be used in prosecutions. Similar arrangements are being made in Scotland and in Northern Ireland.

A list of paints which manufacturers have indicated comply with the regulations is set out below and will be included in the circular. Samples of the paints on this list will be checked by the laboratory of the Government Chemist. The list will be updated as necessary. Full publicity will be given to the arrangements set out in the circular and, in particular, to the list of paints.

The Government's aim is that no manufacturer, distributor, supplier or user of anti-fouling paints should be able reasonably to claim ignorance of the controls now in force.

Paint formulations which manufacturers have indicated comply with the regulations

Manufacturer/Supplier	*Brand Name*
International paint PLC	Micron 25 Cruiser Extra hard Racing Middle Sea Trawler
Blakes paints Ltd.	Tiger Copolymer Titan II
Hempels Marine Paints Ltd.	Antifouling Forte 7260
Sigma Coatings Ltd.	Sigmaplane
Geedon Marine Ltd.	VC17m (Tropicana) VC17m EP (Blue Hat) VC602 Prop-O-Drev
Devoe Coatings BV	ABC-AF No 3 Devran 223
Sikkens BV	Ruwa Antifouling —Special White —Special blue Ruwa Selfpolishing —White —Signal Red —T727 —Blue-1 Vinyl Antifouling TL Ruwa Antifouling Extra Strong Ruwa Bronze Bottom Paint

Local Government Reform

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to a grant to the Tower Hamlets training forum for which the Greater London council applied on 16 January;

(2) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the application for consent to a grant to the disability resource team for an information exercise for which the Greater London council applied on 17 December;

(3) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the Greater London council's application

for consent to a grant to the north Lewisham law centre welfare rights unit for which the Greater London council applied on 30 October 1985;

(4) when he expects to have completed his consideration of the Greater London council's application for consent to a grant to the Brent federation of tenants and residents associations for which the Greater London council applied on 25 August 1985.

Mr. Tracey: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on Tuesday 21 January at column *141*.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to have completed his consideration of the Greater London council's application for consent to a grant to the Wandsworth community forum for which the Greater London council applied on 27 August 1985.

Mr. Richard Tracey: Consent was given on 27 November 1985.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria he applies in considering applications by the Greater London council for consents under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984.

Mr. Tracey: Each application for my right hon. Friend's consent under the provisions of the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 is considered on its merits in the light of all relevant considerations.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he sought from outside bodies before reaching decisions on the four consents sought by the Greater London council under the Local Government (Interim Provisions) Act 1984 to which the answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column 36, relates.

Mr. Tracey: None.

Water Industry

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the effect on any EEC loan provision of the privatisation programme of the water industry.

Mr. John Patten: None. Privatised water authorities will be able to borrow from the European Investment Bank to finance projects in assisted areas, as they do now.

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the total debt of the regional water authorities and for each individual authority.

Mr. John Patten: The total debt of each water authority at 31 March 1985 was as follows:

Authority	*Outstanding debt £m*
Anglian	838
Northumbrian	407
North West	851
Severn Trent	787
Southern	321
South West	140
Thames	385
Wessex	226
Yorkshire	507
English WAs	4,462
Welsh	422
England and Wales	4,884

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state which EEC regulations on water pollution are currently in force in Great Britain; and what is the effect of each such regulation.

Mr. John Patten: The following EEC directives relating to the pollution of surface and underground waters are in force in the United Kingdom:

(1) Directives 73/404, 73/405, 82/242 and 82/243 concerning detergents. The effect is to require a minimum level of biodegradibility for certain types of detergent.

(2) Directive 75/440 on the quality of surface water intended for the abstraction of drinking water. This ensures that surface water that is abstracted for use as drinking water reaches certain standards and is given adequate treatment before being put into public supply.

(3) Directive 79/869 on the sampling of surface water for drinking. This supplements Directive 75/440 by recommending methods of measurement and sampling frequencies.

(4) Directive 78/659 provides for quality objectives to be set for fresh waters in order to support fish life.

(5) Directive 79/923 seeks to ensure a suitable environment for shellfish growth.

(6) Directive 76/160 requires that the quality of bathing water is to be raised over time, or maintained, so as to meet specified quality standards.

(7) Directive 76/464 sets a framework of controls for the discharge of particularly dangerous substances to surface water. To it are annexed two lists of substances. List I includes the more dangerous, for which controls are implemented by separate 'daughter' directives. So far daughter directives are in force for cadmium (83/513), mercury (82/176) and (84/156) and hexachlorocyclohexane (84/491). For controlling the potentially less dangerous substances in List II, national pollution reduction programmes are required and have been established by the United Kingdom for copper, zinc, lead, chromium, nickel and arsenic.

(8) Directive 80/68 regulates the discharge of dangerous substances to underground sources of water.

(9) Directives 78/176 and 83/29 (Amendment) mainly aim to prevent and progressively reduce pollution caused by waste from the titanium dioxide industry. Directive 82/883 lays down steps to be taken to monitor environments affected by wastes from the industry.

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list current and proposed recreational activities at Anglian water authority's Pitsford, Grafham Water and Rutland Water reservoirs; and if he will describe the measures taken by the authority to integrate these activities with the nature conservation interest of these reservoirs given their sites of special scientific interest status;

(2) if he will list those operations proposed by the Anglian water authority at Pitsford Reservoir and Rutland Water of which notice has been given to the Nature Conservancy Council as required by section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act; and if he will detail the response of the Nature Conservancy Council in respect of each notice so received.

Mr. John Patten: I will write to the hon. Member.

Water Industry

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government plan to publish a consultation paper on pension schemes in the event of privatisation for those employed by water authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Washington Development Corporation

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the people appointed to the Washington development corporation, the names or organisations proposing them, their previous lengths of service and their salaries; and if he intends to appoint any others to the board.

Mr. Tracey: The following have recently been re-appointed to the board of the Washington development corporation:

Name	*Length of service (years)*
Professor W. G. McClelland (chairman)	8½
Mr. F. M. Osborn (deputy chairman)	17
Mr. D. R. C. Kelly	2
Councillor J. Walker	7

At his own request, Mr. S. Waring retires from the board on 31 March after five years service. My right hon. Friend has also recently appointed Councillor J. D. S. Brown to the board for the first time. He and Councillor Walker represent Sunderland borough council on the board. Salaries from 1 March 1986 are £14,324 (chairman), £6,466 (deputy chairman) and £2,920 (member).

My right hon. Friend is currently considering whether to make up to three further appointments to the board.

South-East Regional Strategic Guidance

Mr. Evennett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is now in a position to update the regional strategic guidance issued to planning authorities in the south-east in August 1980.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) informed my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Brinton) of the steps being taken to update regional strategic guidance for the south-east in his reply of 27 July 1984. I have today written to Lord Sandford, chairman of the London and south-east regional planning conference, and to hon. Members for constituencies in the south-east seeking views on a draft letter of regional strategic guidance. I have also published the draft for wider public consultation and invited comments by 18 April. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Urban Aid

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now formally notify Portsmouth city council of its entitlement to submit a bid for urban aid; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 25 February 1986, c. *490*]: Portsmouth was not among the local authorities invited to bid for new approvals under the traditional urban programme in 1986-87. The bidding round closed in November 1985. The list of invited authorities will be revised for 1987-88. The practice of inviting selected authorities to bid was introduced in order to underline the Department's intention to concentrate resources on the most needy areas, and to reduce the fruitless work involved in the preparation and assessment of bids which were unlikely to succeed.

Cornish Houses

Mr. Corbett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will provide extra funding to local authorities wishing to purchase Cornish houses in the ownership of the National Coal Board and which have been designated under the housing Defects Act 1984.

Mr. Tracey: I shall answer this question shortly.

Historic Building and Monuments Commission for England

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the arrangements at the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England for ensuring that public funds are properly accounted for and spent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am satisfied that an effective framework exists within which the commission manages public funds and that these procedures will detect any early signs of weakness in financial control. Indeed, they apparently have. I am of course concerned about such weaknesses. The commission has been asked for a full report on its financial procedures. An interim report by the commission's chief executive to the permanent secretary of my Department is already being studied. We will consider what further action needs to be taken in the light of those reports.

CIVIL SERVICE

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, in respect of which examinations are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Luce: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions and premises for which I am responsible:

Category	*Number*
Central departmental offices	10
Regional or local offices or other buildings	14
Training and recruitments establishments	4

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its own merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances.

Mr. Ashley asked the Minister for the Civil Service if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which the Lord President of the Council is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Luce: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions and premises for which the Lord President of the Council has some responsibility.

Category	*Number*
Central departmental office	1

Our policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its own merits. If we have evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with these circumstances.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Housing Benefit

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average payment of housing benefit to pensioners receiving supplementary benefit; how much of this is attributable to rates; and by how much this average payment will be reduced as a result of recipients having to meet 20 per cent. of their rates bill out of basic income.

Mr. Major: It is estimated that the average payment of housing benefit to pensioners receiving supplementary benefit was about £15 a week in May 1985, the latest date for which information is available. About £4·80 of this was attributable to domestic rates after non-dependant deductions. It is estimated that this figure would be of the order of £1 lower if 20 per cent. of recipients' domestic rates bills were ineligible for benefit.

Ministerial Visits

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list in the *Official Report* those institutions, hospitals, special schools or training centres dealing with persons suffering mental handicap or illness visited by Ministers of his Department between 1 September 1985 and the present time, indicating which Ministers undertook each visit, respectively, and the purpose of the visit.

Mr. Whitney: The following table lists visits from 1 September 1985 by myself and Ministerial colleagues to facilities for people with mental handicap or mental illness. As well as launching and opening projects where specified, the purpose of all the visits was to learn about services provided or proposed, and to meet people involved.

Minister for Social Security and the Disabled
(MR. TONY NEWTON)

23 October 1985
Papworth Lodge, Papworth Everard, Cambridgeshire.
(Sheltered workshop, for people with mental and physical handicaps.)

6 February 1986
White Lodge, Chertsey, Surrey.
(Spastics Society residential house for people with mental and physical handicaps.)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Health)
(MR. RAY WHITNEY)

18 November 1985
Goodmayes Hospital, Goodmayes, Essex.
(Mental illness.)

13 December 1985
Larchwood, Bracknell, Berkshire.
(Resource unit, mental handicap.)

23 January 1986
Harmston Hall Mental Handicap Hospital, Harmston, nr. Lincoln.

29 January 1986
Opening of Hill House social Education Centre, Wandsworth.
(Mental handicap.)

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Lords)
THE BARONESS TRUMPINGTON

9 September 1985
Staincliffe General Hospital, Dewsbury, Yorkshire.
(Inspection of site for proposed psychiatric/child assessment facility.)

31 October 1985
Wensley Close, Greenwich
(Opening of residential unit of mentally handicapped children.)

22 November 1985
Fulbourne Hospital (Mental illness), Ida Darwin Hospital, Cambridge.
(Mental handicap.)

3 December 1985
Harperbury Hospital, Hertfordshire.
(Launch of Save the Children Fund's "Playtrack" project.)

8 January 1986
Rampton Hospital, Retford, Nottinghamshire.
(For psychiatric patients requiring special security.)

15 January 1986
The Retreat Hospital, St. Column Major, Cornwall.
(Mental handicap.)

15 January 1986
Carn Brea House, Redruth, Cornwall.
(Mental handicap.)

22 January 1986
Manor House Hospital, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire.
(Mental handicap.)

NHS (Land Sales)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what capital sums have been yielded by individual health authorities resulting from the sale of National Health Service land formerly accommodating large hospitals for the mentally ill and the mentally handicapped during the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that separate information in respect of sales of mental illness and mental handicap hospitals is not collected centrally.

NHS (Property Deals)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what property deals for redeveloping surplus hospital land and accommodation have been concluded by health authorities with private contractors during the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that information on sales of surplus National Health Service land for redevelopment is not collected centrally.

Kidney Transplant

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in his publicity for the kidney donor scheme, he will indicate those diseases a history of which is currently considered to make a cadaver kidney unsuitable for transplantation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: While there are a number of conditions which would make kidneys unsuitable for transplantation, the decision on the suitability of an individual potential donor is a clinical one for the doctors concerned. I do not believe, therefore, that publicising the diseases, a history of which would make a kidney unsuitable for donation, would be particularly helpful. Moreover much publicity is for organ donation in general, rather than kidney donation in particular, and contra-indications would vary according to the organ concerned.

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what guidance is given by his Chief Medical Officer as to those diseases, a history of which is a contra-indication for the use of the victim's cadaver kidney for transplantation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Guidance has been provided for health service staff in the code of practice governing the removal of cadaveric organs for transplantation issued by the Department in February 1983, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Section III of that document lists conditions which may render cadaver kidneys unsuitable for transplantation. The Chief Medical Officer has recently advised that, in addition, patients infected with HTLV III antibodies should not be organ donors.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, for which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Hayhoe: Crown immunity from prosecution under food legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions/premises for which the Secretary of State is responsible:

Category	*Number*
1. Central Departmental Offices	37
2. Regional and local offices	541
3. Storage buildings	4
4. Hospitals and other health premises	*2,750
5. Training establishments	7
6. Research institutions and laboratories (not forming part of an institution included in category 4)	58
7. Other Departmental premises	177

* Approximate.

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

The right hon. Member will be aware of the Government's plans to legislate to remove Crown immunity under the food hygiene legislation from health authorities. There are no similar plans with respect to health and safety at work legislation.

The policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its own merits. If there is evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider with colleagues how best to deal with these circumstances. This may, as in the case of hospital catering, lead to a re-appraisal of Crown immunity.

Supplementary Benefit

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people received supplementary benefit in Watford in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* 1983; and what percentage change that represents.

Mr. Major: In December 1980 (the earliest figures available) 6,378 people were receiving supplementary benefit from the Department's office in Watford. In December 1983 that figure had risen by 45 per cent. to 9,263.
(Source 100 per cent. count of live cases.)

Students Benefits

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research has been carried out by him into the effects of his proposals to remove students' eligibility to claim housing, supplementary and unemployment benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The current proposals affecting students' entitlement to benefits are designed to tackle some of the least appropriate and most wasteful aspects of the present arrangements. They will result in a more rational and straightforward system which will be considerably easier to administer. So far as students themselves are concerned, some three-quarters of the total of half a million will be affected, with about 140,000 gaining the full value of the proposed increase of £36 in the grant. For the remaining 275,000, the net effect will vary depending on their individual circumstances: most are likely to have some reduction in their combined grant and social security entitlement, compared with their position under the current arrangements. The proposals do not affect entitlement to supplementary benefit or unemployment benefit in the long vacation and do not exclude students in privately rented accommodation from housing benefit in term times or short vacations, or in long vacations if they remain in the accommodation.

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number and proportion of hospital appointments in the associate specialist grade in obstetrics and gynaecology.

Mr. Hayhoe: At 30 September 1985 in England there were 35 associate specialists in obstetrics and gynaecology —1·1 per cent. of all doctors in the specialty and 4·1 per cent. of all medical associate specialists.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department plans to phase out the associate specialist grade in obstetrics and gynaecology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Drugs (Licensing and Franchising)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the standards used by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in assessing the possibilities of licensing and franchising new drugs including their special effectiveness are the same as those used by the Advisory Committee on National Health Service Medicines in deciding whether such drugs should be available on prescription.

Mr. Hayhoe: No. The Committee on Safety of Medicines advises on the safety, quality and efficacy of medicinal products. The Advisory Committee on National Health Service Drugs considers need and cost in recommending whether medicinal products in certain therapeutic categories should be available on National Health Service prescription.

Acute Hospitals

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has any guidelines for the optimum size of an acute hospital, including the number of beds, mix of specialties and activities, and for a minimum size for a viable acute hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have not issued formal guidance of this nature on the size or functions of acute hospitals. We expect health authorities to plan for the efficient and cost effective provision of services taking full account of local needs and priorities, available resources including existing provision, health building notes and cost allowances, and the views of the medical profession and the public.

Maternity Services

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has issued any guidelines on the centralisation of maternity services on to one site in each health district, and on the provision of a special care baby unit in conjunction with maternity units; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: General guidelines on the siting of maternity and neonatal units were contained in the second and third reports of the maternity services advisory committee, which have been commended to health authorities for action; and also in the recent draft guidance on the planning and design of new maternity departments at district general hospitals, which has been issued for consultation.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many district health authorities provide maternity services from *(a)* more than one site and *(b)* only one site;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* (i) the total number of maternity units in England and Wales and (ii) the number of maternity units which include a special care baby unit.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have the available information as soon as possible.

Waiting Lists

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details of the waiting lists in the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority area in (i) gynaecology, (ii) orthopaedic and (iii) ear, nose and throat; and if he will state how these compare with the regional averages.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have the available information as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Dr. Owen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the increase in employers' total national insurance payments has been between 1979-80 and 1986-87 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms.

Mr. Major: Employers' national insurance payments show a drop in real terms between 1979-80 and 1986-87 of nearly 22 per cent. Figures for Great Britain, based on 1985-86 prices, are as follows:

	Cash terms £ million	*Real terms £ million*
1979-80	9,832	15,908
*1986-87	12,851	12,446

* Estimate.

The 1979-80 figures include the national insurance surcharge (abolished in 1984-85); the 1986-87 figures exclude amounts recovered for statutory sick pay (introduced in 1983-84). Both figures include payments for the national health service element and the employment protection allocation.

Vaccines

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what steps he is taking to increase the uptake of vaccines for babies and children in England, with particular reference to the north-western region.

Mr. Whitney: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) on 16 December 1985 at column *79*. If the hon. Member wishes to make inquiries about particular regional health authorities, he should approach the chairmen of the authorities concerned.

World Health Organisation

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when his Department last met with representatives from the World Health Organisation; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Whitney: Officials of this Department have frequent contacts with officials of the World Health Organisation. Recent meetings have included discussions on WHO's proposed programme budget for Europe in 1988-89 and on the conference of Ministers of Health on narcotics and psychotropic drug misuse which the United Kingdom is hosting next month.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many civil servants in his Department liaise with the World Health Organisation.

Mr. Whitney: Five officials in the Department have direct responsibility for liaison with the World Health Organisation and, as many aspects of the Department's business relate to WHO interests, there are also frequent contacts at all levels between Departmental officials and officials of the WHO.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what grants his Department makes available to the World Health Organisation; what proportion has been spent on anti-smoking campaigns; and if he will produce figures for the last five years.

Mr. Whitney: The United Kingdom's assessed contribution of US$21·5 million to the World Health Organisation's overall budget of some $980 million in the biennium 1984-85 was met from the Department's vote. It is not possible to say what proportion of this is spent on anti-smoking activities, but expenditure by the World Health Organisation on its global smoking and health programme in 1984-85 from both regular budget and voluntary contributions amounted to some $690,000.

"Helping the Community to Care"

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much money was originally allocated to the scheme entitled "Helping the Community to Care"; when it was first established; what terms as regards maximum size of annual payments, the number and nature of projects funded from the scheme and the length of the scheme's planned existence were made; and what proportion of the scheme's money was actually spent in 1984-85 and is likely to be spent in 1985-86.

Mr. Whitney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services announced on 5 July 1984 that he was making £10·5 million available over three years for this programme and that arrangements for funding projects would be worked out in detail with the voluntary bodies concerned. Details of expenditure on each of the dozen elements in the programme are not yet available. For information about the content of these 12 elements, expenditure in 1984-85 and expected expenditure in 1985-86 I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) on 27 January, at columns *397-98*.

Single Payments

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for the most recent month for which information is available, *(a)* the number of single payment awards as a rate per 1,000 claimants; and *(b)* the average single payment to (i) persons under pension age not required to register for work, (ii) persons under pension age required to register for work and (iii) persons over pension age, for each social security office.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *365*]: I have arranged for this information to be placed in the Library.

Disabled People (Representations)

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why he has not sent NETWORK, the legal advisory service for disabled people, the consultation paper on the Disabled Persons (Services Consultation and Representation) Bill; if he will now do so; and if he will allow an extension beyond 4 March for the submission of their comments.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 February 1986, c. *471*]: I refer the hon. Member to my replies to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on 14 February at columns *596-97* and to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 26 February. I have arranged for a copy of the consultation paper to be sent to NETWORK. Comments on the consultation paper have been asked for by 4 March so that it may be possible for them to be taken into account in amendments to be tabled in advance of the Bill's Report stage on 11 April. There may be opportunities for comments received after that date to be reflected at a later stage.

Retirement Age

Mr. Nicholls asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he now has any proposals to introduce a common retirement age for men and women; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1986, c. *540*]: In the Government's Green Paper on "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9518) we made it clear that our preference was for a flexible age of retirement between defined limits rather than a rigid single age for both men and women. We believe that such flexibility is important to increase individual freedom of choice. As the White Paper on reform of social security noted, consultation on the Green Paper produced no useful suggestions on how the substantial initial costs of this development could be met.

We are continuing to consider how best to achieve our objectives in this area.

Hospitals (Thames Regions)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the hospitals within the four Thames regions which still retain accident and emergency units, together with the number of times in the last three months when they have been placed on a treat and transfer basis.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 25 February 1986, c. *542*]: Details of NHS hospitals within the four Thames regional health authority areas which recorded accident and emergency activity during 1984, the latest year for which information is available, are listed in the table.

I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the remaining information he seeks. It is not collected centrally.

Extract from annual statistical return of patient activity 1984
National Health Service hospitals in the Thames Regional Health Authorities with Accident and Emergency Departments

Hospital name	*District health authority*
North West Thames Regional Health Authority	
Bedford General Hospital (NHS wings)	North Bedfordshire
Luton and Dunstable Hospital	South Bedfordshire
Lister Hospital	North Hertfordshire
Royston and District Hospital	North Hertfordshire
Queen Elizabeth II Hospital	East Hertfordshire
Hertford County Hospital	East Hertfordshire
Hemel Hempstead Hospital	North West Hertfordshire
St. Albans City Hospital	North West Hertfordshire
Harpenden Memorial Hospital	North West Hertfordshire
Watford General Hospital—Peace Memorial Wing	South West Hertfordshire
Barnet General Hospital	Barnet
Finchley Memorial Hospital	Barnet
Edgware General Hospital	Barnet
Northwick Park Hospital	Harrow
Hillingdon Hospital	Hillingdon
Mount Vernon Hospital	Hillingdon
Hayes Cottage Hospital	Hillingdon
West Middlesex Hospital	Hounslow and Spelthorne
Ashford Hospital	Hounslow and Spelthorne
St. Johns Hospital	Hounslow and Spelthorne
Teddington Memorial Hospital	Hounslow and Spelthorne
Southall-Norwood Hospital	Ealing
Ealing Hospital—general wing	Ealing
Central Middlesex Hospital	Brent
St. Mary's Hospital	Paddington
St. Charles' Hospital	Paddington
Paddington Green Childrens Hospital	Paddington
Western Ophthalmic Hospital	Paddington
Charing Cross Hospital	Hammersmith and Fulham
Westminster Hospital	Victoria
Westminster Childrens Hospital	Victoria
St. Stephens Hospital	Victoria
North East Thames Regional Health Authority	
Basildon Hospital	Basildon and Thurrock
Orsett Hospital	Basildon and Thurrock
Chelmsford and Essex Hospital	Mid Essex
Clacton and District Hospital	North East Essex
Essex County Hospital	North East Essex
Halstead Hospital	North East Essex
Harwich and District Hospital	North East Essex
Hertfordshire and Essex General Hospital	West Essex
Ongar War Memorial Hospital	West Essex
Princess Alexandra Hospital	West Essex
Saffron Walden Hospital	West Essex
St. Margaret's Hospital	West Essex
Rochford General Hospital	Southend
Southend General Hospital	Southend
Oldchurch Hospital	Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Harold Wood Hospital	Barking, Havering and Brentwood
Royal Free New Hospital	Hampstead
University College Hospital	Bloomsbury
Middlesex Hospital	Bloomsbury
Whittington Hospital	Islington
Hackney Hospital	City and Hackney
St. Bartholomew's Hospital	City and Hackney
St. Leonards Hospital	City and Hackney
St. Andrew's Hospital	Newham
Newham General Hospital	Newham
The London Hospital (Whitechapel)	Tower Hamlets
The London Hospital (Mile End)	Tower Hamlets
The London Hospital St. Clements	Tower Hamlets
Chase Farm Hospital	Enfield
Cheshunt Cottage Hospital	Enfield
North Middlesex Hospital	Haringey
King George Hospital including west wing	Redbridge
Whipps Cross Hospital	Waltham Forest
Woodford Jubilee Hospital	Waltham Forest

Hospital name	District health authority
South East Thames Regional Health Authority	
The Royal Sussex County Hospital	Brighton
Victoria Hospital	Brighton
Royal Alexandra Hospital for Sick Children	Brighton
Sussex Eye Hospital	Brighton
Sussex Throat and Ear Hospital	Brighton
Eastbourne District General Hospital	Eastbourne
Uckfield Hospital	Eastbourne
Royal East Sussex Hospital	Hastings
Bexhill Hospital	Hastings
Rye Winchelsea and District Memorial Hospital	Hastings
The William Harvey Hospital	South East Kent
Buckland Hospital	South East Kent
Royal Victoria Hospital	South East Kent
Victoria Deal Walmer and District War Memorial Hospital	South East Kent
Kent and Canterbury Hospital	Canterbury and Thanet
Isle of Thanet District Hospital	Canterbury and Thanet
Whitstable and Tankerton Hospital	Canterbury and Thanet
Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital	Canterbury and Thanet
Faversham Cottage Hospital	Canterbury and Thanet
Gravesend and North Kent Hospital	Dartford and Gravesham
West Hill Hospital	Dartford and Gravesham
The Maidstone Hospital	Maidstone
Kent County Opthalmic and Aural Hospital	Maidstone
St. Bartholomews Hospital	Medway
Medway District Hospital	Medway
Sheppey General Hospital	Medway
Sittingbourne and District Memorial Hospital	Medway
Pembury Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Kent and Sussex Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Sevenoaks Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Queen Victoria Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Crowborough War Memorial Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Edenbridge and District War Memorial Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Tonbridge Cottage Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Hawkhurst Cottage Hospital	Tunbridge Wells
Queen Marys Hospital	Bexley
Erith and District Hospital	Bexley
Greenwich District General Hospital	Greenwich
Dreadnought Seamens Hospital	Greenwich
Brook General Hospital	Greenwich
Bromley Hospital	Bromley
Beckenham Hospital	Bromley
Orpington Hospital	Bromley
St. Thomas' Hospital	West Lambeth
King's College Hospital	Camberwell
Dulwich Hospital	Camberwell
Belgrave Hospital for Children	Camberwell
Guy's Hospital	Lewisham and North Southwark
Lewisham Hospital	Lewisham and North Southwark
Children's Hospital	Lewisham and North Southwark
South West Thames Regional Health Authority	
Egham Cottage Hospital	North West Surrey
St. Peters Hospital	North West Surrey
Walton General	North West Surrey
Weybridge Hospital	North West Surrey
Woking Victoria Hospital	North West Surrey
Rowley Bristow Orthopaedic Hospital	North West Surrey
Frimley Park	West Surrey and North East Hampshire
Fleet and District Hospital	West Surrey and North East Hampshire
New Royal Surrey County	South West Surrey
Farnham Road Hospital	South West Surrey
Haslemere and District Hospital	South West Surrey
Epsom District Hospital	Mid Surrey
Cobham and District Cottage Hospital	Mid Surrey
Manor Hospital	Mid Surrey
Caterham and District Hospital	East Surrey
Horley and District Cottage Hospital	East Surrey
Oxted and Limpsfield Hospital	East Surrey
Dorking General Hospital	East Surrey
New East Surrey Hospital	East Surrey
Royal West Sussex Hospital	Chichester
Bognor Regis War Memorial Hospital	Chichester
Midhurst Eastbourne and District Cottage Hospital	Chichester
Arundel Hospital	Chichester

Hospital name	District health authority
Crawley Hospital	Mid Downs
Cuckfield Hospital	Mid Downs
Horsham Hospital	Mid Downs
Worthing Hospital	Worthing
Littlehampton Hospital	Worthing
Mayday Hospital	Croydon
Norwood and District Hospital	Croydon
Purley and District War Memorial Hospital	Croydon
Croydon Eye Clinic	Croydon
Kingston Hospital	Kingston and Esher
Queen Mary's Hospital	Richmond, Twickenham and Roehampton
St. George's Hospital	Wandsworth
St. James Hospital	Wandsworth
South London Hospital for Women and Children	Wandsworth
Nelson Hospital	Merton and Sutton
St. Helier Hospital	Merton and Sutton
Sutton Hospital	Merton and Sutton
Queen Mary's Hospital for Children	Merton and Sutton

NATIONAL FINANCE

Domestic Security Devices

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated yield of value added tax on domestic security devices; and if he will make it his policy to abolish value added tax on such devices.

Mr. Brooke: There is no information available on which to base an estimate, nor any reason to single out the purchase or installation of domestic security devices for relief from value added tax.

EC Budget

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what respects the 1986 EEC budget adopted by the European Assembly differed from the budget approved by the EEC Council with regard to income.

Mr. Brooke: The additional expenditure contained in the adopted budget for 1986, some 629 mecu (£385 million) was to be financed by larger VAT contributions from member states. Within the 1·4 per cent. VAT ceiling, the amount of VAT own resources at the uniform rate was increased in the adopted budget to 20,658,083,453 ecu.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Ashley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the categories, and the numbers within them, of institutions, for which he is responsible, in respect of which exemptions are claimed from *(a)* food hygiene legislation and *(b)* health and safety legislation on the grounds of Crown immunity; and if he will make it his policy to plan to remove the immunity for the relevant institutions.

Mr. Lawson: Crown immunity from prosecution under food hygiene legislation and health and safety legislation applies to the following institutions/premises for which I am ministerially responsible:

Category	Number
Central departmental offices	64
Regional or local offices	*1,475
Storage buildings	128
Factories	7
Training and recruitment establishments	1

* Approximate

These figures include premises where Crown immunity for food hygiene legislation would apply but where food sales or preparation are not at present carried out.

The Treasury's policy on Crown immunity is to consider every case on its own merits. If there is evidence of inadequate standards in particular circumstances I shall consider, with colleagues, how best to deal with those circumstances.

Enterprise

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to create a favourable climate for enterprise.

Mr. MacGregor: The prime objective of the Governments macro-economic policy is to lay a firm foundation for sustained economic growth, by reducing inflation and by pursuing micro economic policies designed to improve the operation of the supply side of the economy and to create an environment in which enterprise can flourish. Measures include privatisation and the removal of obstacles to the free functioning of markets, the reduction and simplification of taxes to reduce distortions and improve incentives and various measures to ease rigidities in the labour market.

Oil Taxation (Corporate Sector)

Dr. Owen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what the increase in the total oil taxation in the corporate sector has been between 1979-80 and 1985-86 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms;

(2) what the increase in the non-oil taxation in the corporate sector has been between 1979-80 and 1985-86 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms.

Mr. Lawson: I shall let the right hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Gross National Product

Dr. Owen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table ranking those 20 countries in the world with the highest gross national product per capita.

Mr. Lawson: The following figures, calculated by the World Bank, are taken from the World Development Report 1985.

Country	GNP per capita Dollars 1983
1. United Arab Emirates	22,870
2. Kuwait	17,880
3. Switzerland	16,290
4. United States	14,110
5. Norway	14,020
6. Sweden	12,470
7. Canada	12,310
8. Saudi Arabia	12,230
9. Denmark	11,570
10. Australia	11,490
11. Germany, Federal Republic	11,430
12. Finland	10,740
13. France	10,500
14. Japan	10,120
15. Netherlands	9,890
16. Austria	9,250
17. United Kingdom	9,200
18. Belgium	9,150
19. Libya	8,480
20. New Zealand	7,730

Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether, in the manner of the answer given on 14 February 1985, *Official Report*, column *288*, he will publish an updated table on direct revenue effects for 1985-86.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 February 1986, c.*540*]: The table shows the additional yield in respec of 1985-86 from the specified taxes if 1978-79 rates, allowances and rate bands (after indexation to 1985-86 levels) were substituted for 1985-86 rates, allowances and rate bands.

Additional yield from reverting to 1978-79 tax structure

	on 1985-86 tax base	*£ million*
Income tax		6,200
of which:		
Investment Income Surcharge	740	
Rates and thresholds above the basic rate (excluding investment income surcharge)	1,285	
Capital transfer tax		70
Capital gains tax		550

In each case, the 1985-86 tax base is taken as given. It is not possible to determine to what extent changes in the taxes between 1978-79 and 1985-86 may have affected levels of income and transfers and disposals of capital.

The figures for capital transfer tax and capital gains tax are on a different basis from those in the previous reply. The present basis corresponds to that adopted for income tax.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Council of Ministers

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mrs. Chalker: The usual forecast was deposited in the House today. At present nine formal meetings and one informal meeting of the Council are scheduled for March 1986.

On 3 March the Industry Council will discuss a paper on the Community's approach to improving the competitiveness of industry; and steel trade problems caused by the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community.

The Council may discuss the EC-non-energy raw materials exploration loans scheme; the next shipbuilding directive; raw materials for biotechnology; progress on a new mechanism on starch and sugar; and the transfer of technology.

On 4 March there will be a special meeting of the African Caribbean Pacific-EEC Council to discuss the guaranteed price for ACP sugar exports to the Community under the sugar protocol to the Lomé convention.

The Environment Council will meet on 6 March to consider the draft directive on large combustion plants intended to lay down reductions in emissions of sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and dust from all existing large combustion plants; a draft directive on sulphur content of gas oil, which would reduce the maximum permitted sulphur content of gas oil placed on the market within the Community from 1 July 1987; a draft directive on the use of sewage sludge on agricultural land and the new water directive intended to carry forward the existing 1976 directive.

The Council will also discuss the European Year of the Environment.

On 10 March the Economic and Finance Council will discuss a mandate for the Community for the forthcoming negotiations in the OECD consensus group on further improvements in transparency and discipline in the use of tied aid credits for developing countries. The Council will also consider the budget reference framework for 1987; international debt issues; points arising from the European Court of Auditors annual report for 1984; and the Commission's quarterly review of the economic situation in the Community. The Council may also consider a report from the working party on fiscal harmonisation.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 10-11 March. It will continue discussion of the draft mandate for the negotiations on the future of the multi-fibre arrangement. It will also discuss EC-Japan relations and preparations for a new round of multilateral trade negotiations.

The main items on the agenda for the Transport Council on 14 March will be further consideration of the Commission proposals on aviation and shipping. The Council will also consider transitional measures to ensure that the agreed target date of 1992 for the abolition of quantitative restrictions on intra-Community road haulage is met.

The Fisheries Council on 18 March is to consider the 1986 guide prices for certain species and amendments to the technical conservation regulation though these items have yet to be confirmed.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 24-25 March 1986 to consider the 1986 price proposals, the milk outgoers scheme; and agricultural structures.

On 18 March the Internal Market Council will consider a report from the Commission on progress under the new approach to standards, including certification. A proposal on simple pressure vessels and a background paper on consumer safety are likely to be discussed. The Council will consider a Commission proposal concerning a work programme for creating a common information market; the draft directive on powered industrial trucks; and a proposal to make minor technical amendments to the

directive on the range of nominal quantities and nominal capacities permitted for certain prepackaged products. The Council may discuss the proposed commercial agents directive which seeks to regulate the relationship between agents and their principles.

The Energy Council will meet on 20 March. It will discuss the effects of lower oil prices; a draft decision on coal state aids and associated social measures. It will also discuss a proposed ERDF community programme on energy, known as VALOREN.

The Council will also discuss Commission papers on solid fuels and on a proposed package of measures to promote the exploitation of new and renewable energy sources.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 28 February 1986

ENERGY

Nuclear Power

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement setting out Her Majesty's Government's assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the current nuclear power provision; and if he intends to expand the provision of nuclear power.

Mr. Goodlad: A total of 20 per cent. of the electricity available from the United Kingdom public supply system was generated by nuclear power in 1985. Our nuclear power stations have proved themselves as reliable base load generating capacity. The security of supply which they have provided has been in contrast to the disruptions in the supply of other fuels in recent years.

Many of our nuclear stations have been in service for more than 20 years and on current estimates are expected to reach the end of their useful lives in the 1990s. The Government believe that it is prudent, in the face of uncertainties over supplies and prices of energy, for the country to have available a range of supply options. Nuclear power stations have the potential to produce electricity more cheaply than other fuels provided they can be built to time and cost. The Government therefore see an important and necessary role for nuclear power in the years ahead. The proportion of electricity generated is expected to rise to about 25 per cent. by the turn of the decade. The contribution for new nuclear capacity will depend on decisions yet to be taken, including that on Sizewell B.

Electricity Consumption

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many industrial sites in the United Kingdom have a consumption of 100 million units of electricity.

Mr. Goodlad: I am informed that at present there are 70 industrial sites supplied by the electricity supply industry in England and Wales whose consumption exceeds 100 million kWh per annum. No account has been taken of any privately generated electricity. The situation in Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland respectively.

Wylfa and Trawsfynydd Power Stations

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will state the dates on which the operational lives of Wylfa and Trawsfynydd nuclear power stations have been extended and for what reasons; what is the present assessment of the end of their operational lives; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what changes in safety criteria have accompanied each of the extensions of the operational lives of the Wylfa and Trawsfynydd nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Central Electricity Generating Board is responsible under statute, subject to compliance with the terms of the licence from the nuclear installations inspectorate, for determining the safe operating life of these stations. I have asked the chairman to write to my hon. Friend.

Nuclear Reprocessing

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) what is the value of nuclear reprocessing business carried out by BNFL for each of the past five years;

(2) what is the value of nuclear reprocessing carried out for export for each of the past five years;

(3) for which countries, and for what value, nuclear reprocessing has been carried out by British Nuclear Fuels Limited for each of the past five years.

Mr. Goodlad: BNFL's income from reprocessing both in total and under its exports contracts was as follows:

	£ million	
	Total	*Exports*
1981	190	80
1982	270	130
1983	260	120
1984	320	140
1985	450	210

These sums include transport costs, met by customers, and advance payments for future reprocessing.

BNFL has contracts with customers in the following countries:

Canada
Italy
Japan
Netherlands
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
West Germany

The value of its business with each is commercial in confidence.

Neighbourhood Energy Action

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his Department's funding for Neighbourhood Energy Action in the current financial year; and what is the proposed grant for 1987-88.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department has made grants to Neighbourhood Energy Action for 1985-86 totalling £185,764. The level of grant for 1986-87 is now under consideration. Funding for subsequent years will be considered in the light of the development of insulation projects.

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Energy what progress his Department is making towards an agreed national programme with the Manpower Services commission for the expansion of Neighbourhood Energy Action projects to insulate the homes of low-income families; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department's energy efficiency office has agreed with the Manpower Services Commission an initiative within the community programme to promote the expansion of insulation projects. A promotional leaflet, describing the initiative, jointly prepared by the energy efficiency office, the

Manpower Services Commission and Neighbourhood Energy Action, is being distributed through local Manpower Services Commission offices.

Mr. Rost asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is satisfied with the contribution made by Neighbourhood Energy Action in insulating homes of low-income families; how many local schemes have to date been established; how many are planned for 1986-87; and what is the estimated number of homes that have been insulated under these schemes.

Mr. Peter Walker: Yes. I recently launched the 222nd insulation project in the programme co-ordinated by Neighbourhood Energy Action. My Department has now issued a total of 460 seedcorn grants for project preparation, and 268 grants for project start-up. I would expect that around 400 projects will be operating by the end of 1986-87. To date, over 130,000 homes have been insulated by the projects.

GLC (Lorry Ban)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether the Greater London council night-time and weekend lorry ban order, which exempts trunk roads, has been drafted to apply equally to all London trunk roads after 1 April.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I am advised that the effect of the GLC's order as drafted is the same for all trunk roads, exempting them from the ban, irrespective of the date on which they become trunk roads.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available to his Department on the effect on lorry traffic on the roads in London for which he will be responsible from 1 April of the Greater London council lorry ban introduced on 31 January; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand that the GLC has so far issued some 20,000 exemption permits allowing lorries to travel to destinations anywhere in London during the hours of the ban, and that no application for a permit has been refused. Before the ban came into operation, the M25 has already reduced lorry mileage in London by over 20 per cent., bringing daytime as well as night time benefits. Heavy lorries coming into London at night on the Archway road dropped by over 50 per cent. to 189 after the north-east section of the M25 was opened.

Some other roads for which the Department will assume responsibility are not heavily used by lorries at night. To illustrate, counts in October 1985 showed only two to three dozen heavy goods vehicles using the south circular between midnight and 6 am.

A605 (Inspector's Report)

Mr. William Powell asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the report of the inspector who conducted the inquiry into the A605 Higham Ferrers to Thrapston road.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The A605 Higham Ferrers—Thrapston Improvement is a principal road scheme for which Northamptonshire county council is the highway authority. A public inquiry into the orders for the scheme was held on 2 to 10 July 1985. The inspector's report was received by the Secretary of State for Transport on 8 October 1985. It is hoped that a decision whether or not to confirm the orders will be made by early April.

Boeing 747

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will specify the precise nature of the repairs in the internal structure of Boeing 747 aircraft currently being carried out as a result of the discovery of cracks.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The Civil Aviation Authority has informed me that all the cracks found in the course of the inspections required for Boeing 747 aircraft are in the fuselage frames. Repair schemes follow normal practice for structural repairs on aircraft and are designed according to standard procedures, but Boeing advice is sought if required. The precise nature of the repairs will depend upon the position and size of the crack. They may take the form of a "doubler" patch riveted over the crack or, in some cases, the cracked segment of the frame may be removed and a new segment spliced into place. The work is monitored by engineers of the Civil Aviation Authority.

M25 (Lighting)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of the M25 motorway is illuminated; and what further lighting schemes are planned.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Nearly 42 per cent. is currently lit. Lighting is planned to be provided for junctions numbered 3, 6, 11, 21, 21A and the remainder of junction number 23. The need for further lighting will be kept under review.

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to light all the access and egress roads to the M25 for which he has responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: There are plans to light junctions numbered 3, 6, 11, 15, 21, 21A and the remainder of junction number 23. There are no current proposals to light any other roads in the immediate vicinity of the M25 for which the Department is responsible. The need for further lighting will be kept under review.

Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1983

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Transport in what ways he proposes to amend the Highways (Road Humps) Regulations 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The existing regulations specify the circumstances in which road humps may be constructed, the nature, dimensions, location and spacing of the humps, and requirements as to the placement of traffic signs. We are still considering detailed changes to those provisions in preparation for consultation with representative organisations. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a copy of the consultation document in due course.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Departmental Policy

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the objectives of his Department's policies for the rest of this Parliament.

Sir Keith Joseph: My Department's principal objectives for Education are to improve standards throughout the education service and to use more effectively the substantial resources available. In schools the aim is to pursue the objectives set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469). In particular I shall continue, in consultation with those concerned in the education service and outside it, to seek greater clarity about the objectives and content of the curriculum with a view to promoting understanding and skills as well as knowledge, strengthening the practical and technical elements of the curriculum, and fostering the application of what is learnt to real problems and situations; to reform the examinations system and improve assessment in particular through the introduction of the GCSE; to improve the quality of teaching, with more rigorous and applied teacher training (including in-service training) and through the appraisal of teacher performance, more effective selection of teachers, and the reform of the teachers' pay structure and conditions of service; and to reform the management of schools to give parents more responsibility and influence. After the enactment of the Education Bill now before Parliament, I intend to make a start with the implementation of its provisions for school government and in-service training of teachers.

In the youth service field the objective is to develop policies for meeting the widely varying needs of young people through the work of the recently established National Advisory Council for the youth service and in other ways. In non-advanced further education, the aim remains to increase the responsiveness of the service to the needs of employers while providing a sound education for young people and encouraging improved use of resources. In the short term key objectives will be to assess and take appropriate action on the current review of vocational qualifications and to complete a joint study with the local authority associations on efficiency.

We are aiming to raise quality and standards in higher education and, while preserving the full breadth of higher education provision, to make it more responsive to the needs of the economy. We intend to maintain the availability of opportunity to study in higher education for those able to benefit, and to pursue value for money, including a more selective approach to the funding of research.

In science, the Department's aim is to maintain and enhance the strength and quality of the science base in higher education and the research councils. Consonant with this, the objectives are: to encourage greater concentration and selectivity of research activities; closer and better working with industry and commerce; more funding from private sector sources; better management yielding greater value for money; increased flexibility enabling faster response to new scientific opportunities; to keep under review the balance between international and national scientific endeavours; and thereby to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the United Kingdom in science and technology, and improve the efficiency, competitiveness and innovative capacity of the United Kingdom economy.

Computer Technology

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what studies his Department has conducted into the possible roles of advanced computer technology in higher education.

Mr. Walden: Two major studies have been undertaken on the potential for the use of advanced computer technology in higher education. A working party on future facilities for advanced research computing considered the likely needs for advanced research computing and the various options open to the university and research council community for acquiring, operating and providing access to the necessary services. The working party was chaired by Professor A. J. Forty of the university of Warwick and reported to the Advisory Board for the Research Councils, the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils, and the University Grants Committee.

A second working party, under the chairmanship of Miss D. A. Nelson, then director of the computer centre at Hatfield polytechnic, considered the type and level of computing facilities that should be provided for teaching in universities and the services that should be provided by computing centres to support teaching facilities. It reported to the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils.

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what steps he is taking to seek to ensure that British universities are able to gather the resources to finance projects to explore the potential uses of advanced computer technology in the university curriculum; what study he has made in this context of project Athena at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: Project Athena is one of a number of overseas university activities that have been taken into account in formulating programmes to develop the use of advanced computer technology for teaching in United Kingdom universities. An important aspect of the project is the use of student work stations, connected by a local area network covering the campus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to enhance traditional teaching methods across a wide range of subjects. This is also the aim of a series of "pump-priming" teaching projects supported through the University Grants Committee and the Computer Board for Universities and Research Councils. Over 100 of these pilot projects are now in operation at a total cost of £7.5 million, including special funding of £1·5 million made available by my right hon. Friend.

Another important objective of project Athena is to design systems that will allow computers built by different manufacturers to communicate freely. This activity is paralleled in the United Kingdom by the support of a Joint Academic Network (JANET) which enables computer systems at university, polytechnic and Research Council sites to talk to each other regardless of machine type or geographical location. This allows the cost-effective sharing of expensive resources. The Department, on the advice of the Computer Board, provides capital and

recurrent support totalling £3 million a year for the operation of JANET. In addition my right hon. Friend has made available special funding of £5 million over three years to enhance the scope and speed of the network.

Teacher Training

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list for the last 30 years the number of students undertaking teacher training courses; and if he will detail the number and proportion in each year of students in church training colleges.

Mr. Chris Patten: The available information is shown in the table. Enrolment figures before 1978 do not identify students in church colleges separately.

Students on ITT Courses in the United Kingdom (Universities and Public Sector† Establishments)*

	Total Students (000s)	*Students in Church Training Colleges (000s)*	*Church Colleges as Percentage of Total*
1955	33·1	‡	‡
1956	34·0	‡	‡
1957	35·6	‡	‡
1958	37·8	‡	‡
1959	40·9	‡	‡
1960	43·3	‡	‡
1961	44·7	‡	‡
1962	58·7	‡	‡
1963	66·5	‡	‡
1964	75·7	‡	‡
1965	87·2	‡	‡
1966	100·3	‡	‡
1967	113·1	‡	‡
1968	123·4	‡	‡
1969	127·5	‡	‡
1970	130·7	‡	‡
1971	134·7	‡	‡
1972	136·2	‡	‡
1973	133·5	‡	‡
1974	126·0	‡	‡
1975	119·2	‡	‡
1976	101·2	‡	‡
1977	76·7	‡	‡
1978	57·9	12·7	21·9
1979	48·6	10·3	21·2
1980	42·8	8·5	19·9
1981	40·6	8·1	20·2
1982	37·5	7·8	20·8
1983	37·7	7·7	20·4

* Numbers on 31 December.
† Numbers on 1 November.
‡ Not available.

Sixth Form Education

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what were the costs per pupil of sixth form education in each local education authority in the latest year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: It is not possible to identify separately the costs of sixth form education in each local education authority.

A-Level Passes

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to how many A-level passes were achieved in independent schools in 1985; what percentage this was of the total number of such passes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The numbers of A-level passes attained by English school leavers* from maintained and independent schools in 1983-84 were:

	Number (000s)	*Percentage*
Independent schools	81·0	24·3
Maintained schools	252·6	75·7
All schools	333·6	100·0

A further 50,200 A-level passes were achieved in 1983-84 by young people at FE establishments†.

* School leavers survey.

† FE 113 STATS survey. Full-time home and sandwich students aged 19 or less.

All data on examinations subject to sampling error.

Schools (Hampshire)

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of schools in Hampshire built before 1914.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the number of schools in Hampshire built before 1914 is not held by my Department.

Save British Science Campaign

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his meeting with representatives of the Save British Science Campaign on Monday 17 February.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend and I met Professor Lamb, Dr. Mulvey and Dr. Leggett representing the Save British Science Campaign on 17 February. My right hon. Friend welcomed the emergence of Save British Science as a voice of the scientific community. There was agreement about the desirability of some increase in support for science both from public funds and from industry, but my right hon. Friend pointed out that a convincing case needed to be made in terms of economic benefit.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Syria (Political Prisoners)

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, when he meets the Syrian Foreign Affairs Minister in London, he will raise with him cases concerning political prisoners in Syria held without charge or trial.

Mr. Renton: My right hon. and learned Friend will have very much in mind when he sees Mr. Shara' the strong feelings in this country about human rights issues, including human rights in Syria, but he does not intend to raise specific cases unless there is a particular reason to do so.

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of any correspondence between his Department and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics regarding the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg, together with replies received; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton We have no record of any correspondence between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Soviet authorities on the case of Raoul Wallenberg. This matter has, however, been raised directly with Soviet Ministers on a number of occasions. Regrettably, the Soviet side has had nothing to add to its position as stated in its note handed to the Swedish ambassador in Moscow in 1957.

Arab Boycott (Documentation)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration was given to the potential impact on United Kingdom trade with Arab countries when Her Majesty's Government decided not to co-operate in Arab boycott documentation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton The authentication service was little used and we considered that its withdrawal was unlikely to impair trade with Arab countries, to which we continue to attach great importance.

Soviet Jewry

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the Soviet Jews refused permission to emigrate from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on whose behalf Her Majesty's Government have made representations to the Government to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and what were the dates on which such representations were (*a*) made and (*b*) replied to.

Mr. Renton The following Soviet Jewish cases were raised during 1985 with the Soviet authorities at ministerial or official level:

Anatoly Shcharansky—May, July, August
Alexandr Kholmiansky—February, May
Roald Zelichenok—July, August
Iosif Begun—May
Ida Nudel—May

All five individuals have applied for, and been refused, permission to emigrate to Israel. They were also the victims of other serious forms of deprivation of liberty and harassment. In all cases, our representations were met either with no response, or with the answer that these cases had been dealt with in accordance with Soviet law. The cases of a few Soviet Jews having family links with the United Kingdom and seeking to come here have also been raised among bilateral personal cases. In the interests of those concerned, however, we do not normally make details of these public.

WALES

Sellafield

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had about the effect on Wales of the recent discharges of radioactive waste from Sellafield; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: As my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government assured the House on 19 February, the Welsh Office is in close liaison with the DOE and the MAFF, and with other bodies, in discussions about the environmental aspects of radioactive waste discharges, including those from Sellafield. In addition, the Welsh Office has an assessor on the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee and on the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Community.

Housing Repairs

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a summary of the tenders notified for the repair of former council houses in Wales under the Housing Defects Act showing *(a)* location, *(b)* type of design, *(c)* total cost, *(d)* planning and building regulation fees, *(e)* design costs, *(f)*supervision costs, *(g)* value added tax and *(h)* net cost for works;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a summary of the costs notified for the repair of former council homes in Wales under the Housing Defects Act showing *(a)* location, *(b)* type of design, *(c)* total cost and *(d)* costs for necessary temporary accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not collected by the Department.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what have been the statistical projections for Wales used by his Department between 1979 and now concerning changes in *(a)* the total number of economically active people, *(b)* the number of employees in employment and *(c)* the number of self-employed persons, showing if possible the changes in these projections at approximately 12-monthly intervals.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Of the three sectors mentioned, statistical projections are used by the Welsh Office in relation to the economically active. Projections of this group are prepared by the Department of Employment and appeared in the following editions of the *Employment Gazette:*

February 1986 — (Regional Labour Force Outlook to 1991).
April 1984—(Regional Labour Force Outlook to 1991).
November 1981 — (Regional Labour Force Outlook to 1986).
September 1978 (Regional Civilian Labour Force Projections).

Woolaway Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by district council area the location of Woolaway type homes eligible for refurbishment under the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. Mark Robinson: According to information provided by district councils, there are Woolaway houses in the private sector, which originated in the public sector, in the following districts: Cardiff; Cynon Valley; Islwyn; Ogwr; Rhymney Valley; Taff Ely; and Vale of Glamorgan.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what information he has as to why no Woolaway homes in the private sector have been refurbished;

(2) what information he has as to the costs likely to be incurred by Woolaway home owners for the refurbishment of their homes; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what steps he is taking to determine whether the cost limit available under the Housing Defects Act for the refurbishment of Woolaway type homes is adequate.

Mr. Mark Robinson: One of the conditions for owners receiving assistance by way of reinstatement grant under the Housing Defects Act 1984 is that after reinstatement the dwelling should be likely to be mortgageable. No repair system for Woolaway homes which would be generally acceptable to lending institutions has up to now been available. I understand that PRC Homes Ltd. is likely to license such a system very shortly and has received a further four systems for consideration.

Once approved systems become available we will be monitoring the costs or reinstatement to see if the eligible expense limit is appropriate as it applies to Woolaway houses.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales what provison exists for owner-occupiers who have bought Woolaway type homes from local authorities to resell to that authority if they are unable to achieve refurbishment within the cost limits allowed; and what financial provision is made to those local authorities for such repurchase.

Mr. Mark Robinson: We are prepaed to prescribe a higher eligible expense limit should it prove necessary. Should it not prove practicable to repair Woolaway houses at reasonable cost, owner-occupiers will automatically become entitled to assistance by way of repurchase under section 3(2) of the Housing Defects Act; however I expect practicable repair methods to be available soon. We have made special allocations to housing authorities in Wales to meet in full their reasonable estimates of their commitments under the Housing Defects Act in 1986-87.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether the PRC homes standard, applicable to all other property types specified in the Housing defects Act, will apply to the refurbishment of Woolaway type homes.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Yes. One of the conditions for owners receiving assistance by way of reinstatment grant under the Housing Defects Act 1984 is that after reinstatement the dwelling should be likely to be mortgageable. Building socieities so far have been generally unwilling to lend on any dwelling designated under the Housing Defects Act 1984 unless it is reinstated by means of a scheme licensed by PRC Homes Ltd.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales pursuant to the answer of 19 February, *Official Report*, column 167, if he will place in the Library copies of the representations he has received concerning Woolaway homes.

Mr. Mark Robinson: No. All the representations were unsolicited letters from private individuals and it would be inappropriate to make them available without permission from the individuals concerned.

Housing (Refurbishment)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list the total number of completions by local authorities in Wales of refurbishment under the Housing Defects Act, stating by local authorities the minimum, maximum and average cost of such refurbishment;

(2) if he will list, by district council area, the number of completions, by type, of homes under the housing Defects Act, and the number of refurbishments currently under way.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information is taken from provisional returns provided by district councils and gives the position at December 1985.

One completed reinstatement grant has been paid under the terms of the Housing Defects Act 1984. The grant was paid by Monmouth district council and was for £12,257. The numbers and amounts of grants approved but not completed is as follows:

District Council	*Number of grants approved*	*Amount of grant approved* £
Delyn	11	128,281
Newport	11	113,618
Rhymney Valley	2	23,063
Taff Ely	1	14,000

Information on the types of dwellings involved is not yet available.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those homes, by type, eligible for refurbishment under the Housing Defects Act, other than Woolaway type, and other than single-storey, where all external walls have to be treated or where an inner lining can be maintained.

Mr. Mark Robinson: It is necessary to treat all external walls in reinstating every type of dwelling designated under the Housing Defects Act 1984. In some or all of the following types, the lining can be maintained: Airey, Cornish Unit, Dorran, Myton, Newland, Orlit, Stent, Unity, Wates and Woolaway.

Biomass International, Clwyd

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much Welsh Development Agency cash has been made available and in what form to Biomass International, Clwyd.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The Welsh Development Agency made finance available to Biomass International Limited in the form of £400,000 for cumulative redeemable preference shares and £16,666 for ordinary shares.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much Welsh Office moneys, including selective financial assistance, has been given to Biomass International, Clwyd.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The only financial assistance offered by the Welsh Office to this company has been regional selective assistance. This took the form of a job creation grant not exceeding £608,000 offered to Biomass Ltd, which traded as Biomass International, in respect of a project to provide 76 jobs at Deeside.

With this type of assistance, the amount of grant paid is related directly to the number of jobs actually provided. Only one part-payment of grant was made, against the jobs which had been created by October 1985.

DEFENCE

Telephone Security

Mr. Robert Atkins asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for improving telephone security in his Department.

Mr. Younger: The risk of interception by hostile intelligence services of official telephone calls, including those made on the Government telephone network, is growing continually. My Department's security regulations contain explicit instructions warning against the discussion of classified information on the telephone, but I have decided that further action is required to ensure that those instructions are complied with. My Department will therefore be undertaking a number of telephone monitoring exercises over the next few months. These will be strictly confined to certain internal Ministry of Defence telephone lines, and calls on the public network will not be monitored.

Departmental Policy

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the objectives of his Department's policies for the rest of this Parliament.

Mr. Younger: The main objective of British defence policy is the maintenance of national security and peace with freedom and justice. We aim to achieve this by continuing to play a full and active part in the North Atlantic Alliance so as to contribute to collective deterrence against aggression; and by promoting peace and stability elsewhere in the world. We intend to continue to enhance the capability of the United Kingdom's Armed Forces; encourage the achievement of verifiable arms control agreements; play a full part in organisations for European defence co-operation; pursue efficiency and value for money in defence expenditure, including the promotion of competition and international collaboration in equipment procurement; and rationalise and further contract-out support activities in order to release more resources for the front line.

Science Studentships

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence when he will reply to the letters of 24 January and 11 February from Professor B. G. Gowenlock, head of the department of chemistry, Heriot Watt university, concerning science studentships funded by his Department.

Mr. Lee: A reply was sent by an official to Professor Gowenlock on 14 February.

Ulster Defence Regiment

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions and on which occasions units of the Ulster Defence Regiment have been forced to fire upon motor cars which have deliberately driven at members of the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Mr. Stanley: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence which sites belonging to his Department are to be used for exploratory work in treating nuclear waste pursuant to the statement by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 25 February.

Mr. Lee: My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), in his statement on 25 February, when referring to deep disposal sites, mentioned that the nuclear industry was seeking ways of improving the conditioning of intermediate level wastes. Staff at the Atomic Weapons Research Esablishments at Aldermaston are collaborating with the civil nuclear industry in a research programme on the conditioning of such wastes for deep disposal.

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the sites he is considering for possible dispersal of radioactive reactor compartments arising from the decommissioning of nuclear powered submarines, pursuant to the statement of the Secretary of State for the Environment on 25 February.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence which coastal areas within his Department's control will be examined as possible sites for the disposal of radioactive waste from decommissioned nuclear-powered vessels: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Defence which coastal areas within his Department's control will be examined as possible sites for the disposal of radioactive waste from decommissioned nuclear-powered vessels; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: If an inland site is selected to meet the requirement described by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for the Environment, on 25 February at column 812, it may be necessary to establish a small separate coastal site for disposing of the reactor compartments of decommissioned nuclear powered submarines. No decisions have yet been taken. Once suitable MOD sites have been identified for exploratory work to be undertaken on a contingency basis, the House will be informed, and the work would be subject to normal planning procedures. Any subsequent development of a site, should that prove necessary, would be subject to a public inquiry.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Disabled People (Services)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his estimate of the total annual expenditure in the current year on services related to the needs of disabled people; and what was the corresponding expenditure during 1981.

Mr. Newton: It is not practicable to calculate the total amount spent in any one year on measures of benefit to disabled people since many services are provided for them in common with other groups and some items, such as staff costs, cannot be separately identified.

Birth Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will publish the latest available statistics for the rates of intervention in birth by *(a)* caesarian section and *(b)* forceps, suction or other means per 1,000 births by health authority area; and what

information he has as to how the British figures compare with those in (i) the United States of America, (ii) other EEC countries and (iii) Sweden; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Information for England is given in table 1. The Department does not routinely collect information for other countries but some information collated from several non-Government publications is given in table 2.

TABLE 1.
Caesarian and other instrumental deliveries in England, 1983

Regional Health Authority of residence of mother	*Estimated rate per 1,000 deliveries* *Caesarian	*Other instrumental*
Northern	91	92
Yorkshire	96	101
Trent	100	143
East Anglian	110	103
North West Thames	113	146
North East Thames	102	104
South East Thames	94	121
South West Thames	113	124
Wessex	96	121
Oxford	93	117
South Western	105	130
West Midlands	86	93
Mersey	115	124
North Western	107	94
England—all health authorities	101	115

* Elective caesarian and unspecified caesarian.

TABLE 2
Caesarian and other instrumental deliveries in other countries

Country	*Year*	*Rate per 1,000 deliveries* *Caesarian	**Forceps and vacuum*
USA	1983	†203	n/a
France	1981	109	121
Sweden	1981	123	71
Denmark	1979	103	93

* Not directly comparable with the "other instrumental" rates in table 1. The latter include breech extractions without other instrumentalmethods, of which there are about 10 per 1,000 deliveries in England.

† Births in non-federal short stay hospitals.

n/a=Not available.

The decision to perform a caesarian section, or any other procedure, in a particular case is, of course, a matter of clinical judgment.

Hemel Hempstead General Hospital

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the facilities to be provided in phase 1 of the Hemel Hempstead general hospital; and when it is due to be completed.

Mr. Whitney: The Hemel Hempstead general hospital phase 1 will provide 84 acute beds, an intensive care unit, an outpatients' department, an X-ray department, three operating theatres, rehabilitation services, catering and other supporting services. The estimated date for building completion is September 1986, following which a period of commissioning takes place before the hospital is opened.

Waiting Lists

Miss Boothroyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number on waiting lists at hospitals in the Sandwell health authority and Dudley health authority for surgical, medical and other kinds of operations or treatments, including geriatrics and psychogeriatrics.

Mr. Whitney: The information is given in the table.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for admission to NHS hospitals at 30 September 1985 (provisional)

	Surgical acute	*Medical acute*	*Geriatric*	*Others*	*Total*
Dudley district health authority	4,675	14	20	Nil	4,709
Sandwell district health authority	1,195	64	15	Nil	1,274

Single Payments

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the numbers and value of single payments of supplementary benefit in each of the Deparment of Health and Social Security Offices serving the county of Gwynedd in each year since November 1980, showing separate figures for maternity expenses, funeral expenses and other single payments.

Mr. Major: Information about the numbers and value of single payments awarded for maternity and funeral expenses is not collected on a local basis. The following table sets out the total number of single payments made by local offices serving the county of Gwynedd, and their value, since 1980 for years ending early in April.

Office		*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Anglesey	Number	1,042	1,056	1,641	3,189	4,865
	Amount £	37,309	42,157	79,705	170,700	284,760
Caernarfon	Number	713	841	1,117	2,284	3,858

Office		1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
	Amount £	21,522	30,476	67,819	167,361	268,652
Colwyn Bay	Number	609	882	829	1,324	2,639
	Amount £	19,364	29,254	36,461	90,022	184,899
Portmadog/Dolgellall	Number	672	701	593	741	1,096
	Amount £	22,877	29,296	30,093	41,898	62,734

Ambulance Service (Pay)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the total cost nationally of the recent ambulance service pay award.

Mr. Whitney: The cost in 1985-86 is expected to be contained within an increase of 4·7 per cent. of the pay bill. Costs in subsequent years will depend upon the outcome of local agreements intended to lead to major improvements in productivity.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from *(a)* English health authorities, *(b)* regional general managers and *(c)* trade unions, about the recent ambulance service pay award.

Mr. Whitney: Negotiations on pay are a matter for the ambulance Whitley Council and there are direct lines of communication between the management side and National Health Service management. Some representations have been made by regional general managers and others about the local effects of the recent pay settlement. We have not received any representations from trade unions.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provisions the National Health Service management board have made in existing budgets to cover the cost of the recent ambulance service pay award; and whether this award will exceed those budgeted provisions.

Mr. Whitney: Health authorities are expected to meet both pay increases and service requirements from the allocations made to them by Government and from their growing cost improvement programmes.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate has been made by each of the ambulance services in England of the cost of implementing the recent ambulance service pay award.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally.

Addenbrooke's and Papworth Hospitals

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the amount of public money allocated to Addenbrook's hospital, Cambridge and Papworth hospital, respectively, in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may like to consult the chairman of the district health authorities concerned, namely Cambridge for Addenbrooke's hospital and Huntingdon for Papworth hospital.

Primary Health Care

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual expenditure per person on primary health care in *(a)* Hampstead, *(b)* Brighton and *(c)* Islington; and how these figures compare with the national average.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following are the latest available figures:

*Expenditure per head of population on primary health care**

District Health Authority	1984-85 £
Hampstead	101
Brighton	90
Islington	96
Average for district health authorities (England)	83

* Current expenditure on community health services plus net expenditure on family practitioner services. The latter expenditure cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts but has been included (pro-rata to population) from the annual accounts of the family practitioner committees which account for it.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the expenditure on primary health care in the Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire health authority in the last three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following are the figures requested:

Expenditure per head of population on primary health care for Portsmouth and South-East Hampshire Health Authority*

	£
1982-83	78
1983-84	82
1984-85	89

* Current expenditure on community health services plus net expenditure on family practitioner services. The latter expenditure cannot strictly be attributed to particular districts but has been included (pro-rata to population) from the annual accounts of the family practitioner committee which accounts for it.

Local Adjudication Officers

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether local adjudication officers are required to reside in the area for which they have responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Adjudication officers in local social security offices are not required to reside in the area for which they have responsibility but they do, of course, work in offices in or very near to the area served by their particular local office.

Abortions

Ms. Richardson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the number of legal abortions, by category of premises, National Health Service and non-National Health Service, to women usually resident in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* the North-East Thames regional health authority and *(c)* each of the district health

authorities of that regional health authority for each quarter of 1985 or up to the latest quarter for which the data is available.

Mr. Hayhoe: The available information is given in the table, which shows notifications of legal abortions carried out under the Abortion Act 1967. The figures exclude late notifications received after the end of January 1986, and are therefore provisional.

Notifications of abortions: Area of usual residence—England and Wales, North-East Thames Regional Health Authority and District Health Authorities. Catergory of premises—National Health Service (NHS) and non-NHS. By quarter, 1985, provisional

Area of usual residence	*Quarter*							
	March		*June*		*September*		*December*	
	NHS	*non-NHS*	*NHS*	*non-NHS*	*NHS*	*non-NHS*	*NHS*	*non-NHS*
England and Wales	16,864	19,079	15,323	18,994	16,051	19,511	15,021	18,299
North-East Thames RHA	2,191	2,127	2,044	2,123	1,971	2,164	1,980	2,129
Basildon and Thurrock DHA	133	86	116	75	124	90	128	90
Mid-Essex DHA	147	45	125	43	119	38	131	36
North-East Essex DHA	77	80	36	83	74	63	59	61
West Essex DHA	95	115	84	113	84	124	81	132
Southend DHA	98	110	82	116	84	139	100	117
Barking, Havering and Brentwood DHA	206	205	169	187	151	194	157	191
Hampstead DHA	94	119	91	119	73	128	83	124
Bloomsbury DHA	119	174	121	209	102	197	76	188
Islington DHA	111	176	127	147	107	174	128	151
City and Hackney DHA	255	136	237	143	251	137	255	142
Newham DHA	126	165	120	157	103	149	125	161
Tower Hamlets DHA	220	47	203	69	170	54	155	66
Enfield DHA	135	127	140	120	134	134	145	108
Haringey DHA	184	195	213	195	216	191	193	215
Redbridge DHA	83	151	75	145	80	159	70	166
Waltham Forest DHA	108	196	105	202	99	193	94	181

Benefit Uprating

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates to be the administrative cost of implementing the benefits uprating which he announced on 24 February.

Mr. Newton: Around £16 million.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Watts asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average amount of housing benefit paid to single supplementary benefit claimants in Slough *(a)* for furnished accommodation and *(b)* for local authority accommodation.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of domestic ratepayers in Portsmouth receive housing benefit.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to introduce changes to the housing benefit regulations with regard to part III sheltered accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 13 December 1985 at columns *815-816*.

Medicines

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will undertake an inquiry into the illegal import of medicines, including the extent to which such medicines are unlicensed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Residential Homes

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, for each year since 1980 for which figures are available, how much each local authority has spent on payments towards residential care in voluntary and private sector homes.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *368*]. The table gives the figures for individual local authorities as promised in my earlier reply. Further checking of the figures for individual authorities has resulted in minor changes to the national totals previously given. The 1984-85 figures are incomplete because some authorities have not yet submitted expenditure returns for that year.

Payments for residential care services provided by voluntary organisations and registered private persons

£ thousand cash

Local Authority Personal Social Services	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
INNER LONDON					
Camden	1,267	1,255	2,223	2,486	2,585
Greenwich	928	573	920	1,022	—
Hackney	2,874	3,363	3,841	4,639	—
Hammersmith and Fulham	1,746	2,254	2,312	2,440	2,392
Islington	1,118	1,352	1,662	1,329	1,483
Kensington and Chelsea	2,111	2,389	2,544	2,686	2,688
Lambeth	2,766	2,510	2,645	2,631	2,547
Lewisham	3,225	3,850	5,340	3,765	—
Southwark	2,847	3,877	4,025	3,927	4,419
Tower Hamlets	1,731	1,718	1,579	1,965	887
Wandsworth	58	2,118	1,463	1,450	2,368
Westminster	2,530	2,887	2,941	3,093	3,107
City of London	139	161	127	230	26
Total Inner London	23,340	28,307	31,622	31,663	—
OUTER LONDON					
Barking and Dagenham	209	265	307	410	385
Barnet	1,640	1,926	2,361	2,483	2,781
Bexley	794	906	877	915	841
Brent	1,925	2,285	2,424	2,571	2,779
Bromely	1,117	1,222	1,422	1,539	1,627
Croydon	999	1,417	1,480	1,649	1,677
Ealing	1,138	1,379	1,322	1,428	1,388
Enfield	937	1,170	1,336	1,807	1,895
Haringey	1,077	1,640	1,875	1,457	1,682
Harrow	551	611	616	471	629
Havering	383	530	464	497	383
Hillingdon	580	648	678	814	779
Hounslow	1,091	1,238	1,409	1,587	—
Kingston-upon-Thames	560	647	755	895	875
Merton	803	980	992	1,058	—
Newham	990	800	983	1,013	954
Redbridge	1,421	1,657	1,674	1,785	1,848
Richmond-upon-Thames	953	1,341	1,290	1,347	1,314
Sutton	436	514	525	483	527
Waltham Forest	1,504	1,514	1,492	1,473	1,353
TOTAL OUTER LONDON	19,108	22,690	24,282	25,682	—
GLC	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL LONDON	42,448	50,997	55,904	57,345	—

Payments for residential care services provided by voluntary organisations and registered private persons

£ thousand cash

Local Authority Personal Social Services	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
NON-METROPOLITAN COUNTIES and ISLES OF SCILLY					
Avon	1,793	2,390	2,657	2,684	2,568
Bedfordshire	1,534	1,283	1,673	1,576	1,644
Berkshire	1,743	2,078	2,188	2,683	3,085
Buckinghamshire	1,126	1,424	1,523	1,780	1,801
Cambridgeshire	1,204	1,103	1,558	1,568	1,298
Cheshire	1,540	1,547	1,025	1,446	1,538
Cleveland	595	1,066	1,022	909	506
Cornwall	399	389	448	596	657
Cumbria	288	325	436	461	629
Derbyshire	947	1,206	1,337	1,443	1,577
Devon	1,512	1,668	1,679	1,839	1,827
Dorset	1,589	1,742	1,607	1,657	1,488
Durham	465	543	505	508	380
East Sussex	2,170	2,306	2,326	2,239	2,225
Essex	2,930	2,298	2,516	2,663	2,850
Gloucestershire	980	892	971	915	919
Hampshire	3,188	3,666	3,661	3,376	3,438
Hereford and Worcester	914	1,127	1,210	1,226	1,254
Hertfordshire	2,014	2,325	2,480	2,770	2,986
Humberside	882	1,174	1,303	1,104	1,140

Local Authority Personal Social Services	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
Isle of Wight	211	257	302	321	283
Kent	4,590	5,491	6,115	5,653	5,582
Lancashire	3,793	3,608	3,955	3,984	4,127
Leicestershire	1,133	1,109	1,311	1,573	1,567
Lincolnshire	404	475	535	550	536
Norfolk	831	893	922	998	1,165
Northamptonshire	625	738	683	805	769
Northumberland	148	105	108	138	146
North Yorkshire	1,305	1,605	1,643	1,613	1,499
Nottinghamshire	880	1,071	1,283	1,361	1,447
Oxfordshire	926	934	984	1,109	1,004
Shropshire	275	299	348	467	357
Somerset	136	169	—	356	—
Staffordshire	533	547	586	694	519
Suffolk	773	997	933	985	1,038
Surrey	1,927	2,098	2,375	4,074	3,908
Warwickshire	398	426	591	543	603
West Sussex	1,808	1,923	2,071	2,474	3,264
Wiltshire	920	1,335	1,532	1,812	1,908
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—
Total Counties and Isles of Scilly	49,429	54,632	58,402	62,953	—

Payments for residential care services provided by voluntary organisations and registered private persons

£ thousand cash

Local Authority Personal Social Services	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS					
Greater Manchester					
Bolton	285	428	211	280	264
Bury	569	603	702	777	396
Manchester	3,171	3,809	3,039	2,987	—
Oldham	457	185	161	263	221
Rochdale	695	769	794	871	795
Salford	1,092	1,147	1,044	1,020	1,060
Stockport	425	450	434	443	493
Tameside	990	939	950	812	791
Trafford	618	701	726	1,050	1,000
Wigan	426	355	466	379	472
Merseyside					
Knowsley	995	1,126	1,039	782	678
Liverpool	2,594	3,248	3,386	3,654	—
St. Helens	419	388	397	258	242
Sefton	1,406	1,488	1,640	1,601	1,464
Wirral	1,249	1,254	1,139	934	980
South Yorkshire					
Barnsley	180	282	382	491	396
Doncaster	143	158	126	162	227
Rotherham	46	40	41	56	67
Sheffield	494	510	567	680	—
Tyne & Wear					
Gateshead	278	337	352	369	348
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1,524	1,584	1,511	1,647	1,115
North Tyneside	592	782	642	728	612
South Tyneside	287	348	464	453	460
Sunderland	357	245	351	354	265
West Midlands					
Birmingham	2,612	2,505	1,515	1,272	1,978
Coventry	412	410	467	557	537
Dudley	202	372	459	499	437
Sandwell	568	648	269	656	782
Solihull	229	261	398	480	569
Walsall	716	814	728	629	1,019
Wolverhampton	476	519	583	603	471
West Yorkshire					
Bradford	797	918	926	648	718
Calderdale	424	448	523	451	268

Local Authority Personal Social Services	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85
Kirklees	611	941	1,043	879	828
Leeds	568	982	1,006	1,186	1,133
Wakefield	248	329	319	281	300
Total Metropolitan Districts	27,155	30,323	28,800	29,192	—
TOTAL ENGLAND	119,302	135,952	143,106	149,490	—

North-Western Regional Health Authority

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, columns *143-4*, what were the difficulties in securing suitable nominations for a member of the North-Western regional health authority from a trade union background; what steps he took after October 1984 to overcome these difficulties, how many nominations he received after October 1984 from the North-West Trade Union Congress and individual trade unions, and when; what formal response he made to those nominating bodies; and why he has not appointed any of those nominated;

(2) pursuant to the answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, columns *143-4*, why the previous member with a trade union background was not reappointed to the North-Western regional health authority; when he expects to make an appointment to the vacant post; and what criteria he will use in making such an appointment.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 10 February 1986, c. *370*]: Members of regional health authorities are appointed for their personal qualities and ability to contribute to the corporate work of the authority. Other factors taken into consideration include age, health, place of residence and potential conflicts of interest. Nominations are sought from a number of sources but the Secretary of State is not required to appoint from among them. One nominee of the wider trade union movement declined the offer of appointment in August 1985 but another has now been invited to serve.

Severe Weather Payments

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how much was paid out to claimants for exceptionally severe weather in 1985 by *(a)* Blenheim grove office SE15 *(b)* Bournemouth road office SE15 *(c)* London offices;

(2) how many claims were accepted for payment under exceptionally severe weather in 1985 in *(a)* Blenheim grove office *(b)* Bournemouth road office *(c)* London offices.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 February 1986, c. *471*]: It is estimated that approximately 7,500 claims were accepted for payment and £83,500 was paid by offices in the London area. This estimate is based on returns from 88 per cent. of offices in that area. A total of 361 claims were accepted for payment and £3,524 was paid out to claimants by the Bournemouth road office, SE15. I am afraid that because of a clerical error the information requested is not available for Blenheim grove office, SE15.

Social Security Offices (Staff)

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the approximate turnover of staff in grades of clerical assistant and clerical officers, respectively, in social security offices open to the public covering the Hampstead and Highgate constituency, together with maximum and minimum rates of turnover, naming the offices concerned.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1986, c. *610*]: I regret that my earlier reply omitted some of the information requested. Full details for the year ending 31 December 1985 follow:

Turnover is defined as those staff who leave the Department (including those who retire) change offices within the Department or are promoted within an office. The number of staff who leave the Department (including those who retire) is lower. Both sets of figures are set out in the table:

Clerical Assistant

Office	Turnover		Leavers	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Cricklewood ILO	9	64·3	4	28·6
Euston ILO	12	50	5	20·1
Highgate ILO	16·5	47·1	12·5	35·7
Neasden ILO	8	36·4	4	18·2
Paddington ILO	18	72	10	40
Total	63·5	52·9	35·5	29·6

		Per cent.
Turnover	Maximum rate: Paddington ILO	72
	Minimum rate: Neasden ILO	36·4
Leavers	Maximum rate: Paddington ILO	40
	Minimum rate: Neasden ILO	18·2

Clerical Officer

Office	Turnover		Leavers	
	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Cricklewood ILO	12	27·9	10	23·3
Euston ILO	21·5	31·2	18·5	26·8
Highgate ILO	21·5	24·7	16·5	19
Neasden ILO	25	35·7	20	28·6
Paddington ILO	28	34·1	22	26·8
Total	108	30·8	87	24·8

		Per cent.
Turnover	Maximum rate: Neasden ILO	35·7
	Minimum rate: Highgate ILO	24·7
Leavers	Maximum rate: Neasden ILO	28·6
	Minimum rate: Highgate ILO	19

Abbreviation: ILO—Integrated Local Office

NHS Spectacles

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he plans to end the supply of National Health Service glasses through the hospital eye service;

(2) what arrangements he intends to make for patients in the hospital eye service when supplies of National Health Service glasses through the general ophthalmic service end in July.

Mr. Hayhoe: [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1986 c. *610*.]: Arrangements for dispensing glasses in the hospital eye service following the planned introduction of a voucher system to replace dispensing in the general ophthalmic services are under consideration. There will shortly be consultation on the proposals.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Departmental Policies

Mr. Soames asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the objectives of his Department's policies for the rest of this Parliament.

Mr. Butcher: The continuing aim of the Department is to increase the national production of wealth; to promote and enhance the vitality and competitiveness of British trade, industry and commerce within a proper regulatory framework and to increase the United Kingdom's share of world trade.

Advanced Computer Technology

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he is taking to encourage British and overseas companies with interests in advanced computer technology to help finance projects to explore the potential uses of advanced computer technology in the university curriculum; what study he has made in this context of Project Athena at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: My Department has taken no specific initiative in this area. The use of advanced computer technology in the university curriculum is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, and I am aware of the steps that he has been taking.

Lloyd's

Mr. Yeo: asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the deadline for making submissions to the committee of inquiry into regulatory arrangements at Lloyd's.

Mr. Howard: Sir Patrick Neill's committee issued yesterday an open invitation to all those with an interest in its work to submit evidence in writing by 27 March. I am placing copies of the invitation in the Library in order to assist those Members of the House who may wish to put their views to the committee.

Rolls-Royce Ltd.

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how it is proposed to fund preliminary expenses in connection with the sale of shares in Rolls-Royce.

Mr. Peter Morrison: [*pursuant to his reply*, 11 November 1985, c. *48*]: The reduction in the cash limit on Class IV, Vote 17, will be from £147,959,000 to £147,909,000.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Table Salt)

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances and by what authority prisoners are required to pay for table salt; if he will list the prison department establishments to which this applies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: No prisoner is required to pay for table salt. As part of a review last year of dietary scales for prison inmates salt was made a scaled item for provision purposes instead of being issued without limit as in the past. The object of the change was to ensure that the intake of salt as part of the diet would not significantly exceed a level which modern nutritional authorities regard as acceptable for the maintenance of good health. However, salt is available for prisoners to add to food. Objections have been raised by inmates in some establishments to the reduced level of provision and at one establishment the governor made salt available for purchase from the prison canteen. This arrangement has now ceased. In view of the objections by inmates the prison medical authorities have been asked to re-examine the scale of provision with a view to providing more salt in the diet without the risk of adversely affecting health.

Ammunition Purchases

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether plastic bullets or practice rounds were purchased from the firm Hirtemberger Patronen in the years 1982-83 and 1983-84.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Plastic baton rounds supplied to police forces in England and Wales are obtained from the Ministry of Defence.

Prisoners (Transfers)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were transferred from *(a)* England and Wales to Northern Ireland and *(b)*from Northern Ireland to England and Wales in 1984; and under which section of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 such transfers were carried out.

Mr. Mellor: Three prisoners were transferred from England and Wales to Northern Ireland in 1984. One of these transfers was under section 26 of the Criminal Justice Act 1961 (permanent transfer), one under section 27 (temporary transfer) and one under section 29 (transfer for judicial purposes other than trial). Four prisoners were transferred from Northern Ireland to England and Wales, three under section 26 and one under section 27.

Immigration Service, Heathrow

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the establishment for immigration service staff at terminal four at Heathrow airport; how many staff, to date, have been appointed; and what steps he has taken to satisfy himself that staffing levels are adequate to provide passengers with a reasonable service.

Mr. Waddington: The establishment for immigration service operational staff at terminal 4, Heathrow, is four inspectors, 16 chief immigration officers and 96 immigration officers. The majority of these have been appointed to terminal 4, but are currently employed at the other Heathrow terminals or elsewhere in the immigration service. The remainder are currently being trained. In giving approval to this allocation of staff to terminal 4, careful account was taken of the traffic projections of the British Airports Authority and of a comparative analysis of average passenger clearance rates at the other Heathrow terminals.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many interpreters are required to assist immigration service personnel at terminal four at Heathrow; and how many, to date, have been appointed.

Mr. Waddington: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a similar question from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett), on 26 February, at column 566.

Ports of Entry

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list separately all *(a)* designated and *(b)* non-designated ports of entry in the United Kingdom; what are the main criteria he uses for designating a port of entry; and what are the primary differences in practice between designated and undesignated ports.

Mr. Waddington: The ports of entry designated under the Immigration (Port of Entry) (Amendment) Order 1979 are:

Seaports and Hoverports

Dover	Plymouth
Felixstowe	Portsmouth
Folkestone	Ramsgate Hoverport
Harwich	Sheerness
Hull	Southampton
London	Tyne
Newhaven	

Airports

Aberdeen	Liverpool
Belfast	Luton
Birmingham	Lydd (Ferryfield)
Bournemouth (Hurn)	Tees-side
Bristol	Manchester
Cardiff (Wales)	Newcastle (Woolsington)
East Midlands	Norwich
Edinburgh (Turnhouse)	Prestwick
Gatwick-London	Southampton
Glasgow	Southend
Heathrow-London	Stansted-London

All other ports are undesignated.

Ports are considered for designation when it has been demonstrated that scheduled services carrying substantial numbers of passengers subject to immigration control arrive at the port, or, in the case of airports, are diversion airports.

The main difference in practice between designated and undesignated ports is that at the latter carriers must obtain the permission of the Secretary of State to operate services into the port unless, as provided under paragraph 26(1) of schedule 2 to the Immigration Act 1971, the owners or agents have reasonable cause to believe that all disembarking passengers are British citizens.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers, in total and by each port of entry, embarked and disembarked through undesignated ports of entry in each of the last three years; and if he is currently considering designating any further ports of entry.

Mr. Waddington: The information is not available to answer the first part of the question. The answer to the second part is no.

Immigration Cases (Confidential Correspondence)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to say when he expects the completion of the internal inquiry into how matters relating to representations made to his Department by hon. and right hon. Members on immigration cases were published by the *Daily Telegraph* on 3 December 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The inquiry has been completed and my hon. and learned Friend has written to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short), with a copy to the hon. Member, giving its outcome.

SCOTLAND

Woolaway Type Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the total number and their location, by district council area, of Woolaway type homes eligible for refurbishment under the Housing Defects Act, and the number of refurbishments *(a)* commenced, *(b)* completed and *(c)* not started because of grant limits.

Mr. Ancram: There are no Woolaway type homes in Scotland.

Homes (Refurbishment)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list, by district council area, the number of completions, by type, of homes under the Housing Defects Act, and the number of refurbishments currently underway.

Mr. Ancram: Local authorities have indicated that no refurbishments of homes under the Act have been completed or are currently under way.

Scottish Examination Board

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will institute an inquiry into the operation of the Scottish Examination Board during the academic year 1984-85 with regard to the number of complaints about exam results, the recruitment of markers in the current year and the Scottish Examination Board's ability to maintain marking standards.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I see no need for such an inquiry. I congratulate the board on maintaining its normal high standards in the operation of the 1985 examinations in the face of considerable difficulties and am confident that these standards will be maintained in 1986.

Health Service (Common Services Agency)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, in the light of the development of general management in the Scottish Health Service, he will secure the appointment of a general manager to the common services agency of the Scottish Health Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. I have asked the common services agency to appoint a general manager, and it is now proceeding to do so.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Council for Licensed Conveyances (Secretary)

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General what was the official date for the appointment of Nigel Osner as secretary designate to the Council for Licensed Conveyancers'; and when he expects to commence work.

The Attorney-General: The secretary designate was appointed with effect from 21 October 1985, and began work on that day.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General whether the secretary designate of the Council for Licensed Conveyancers will work independently of the Lord Chancellor's Department; and on what terms and salary.

The Attorney-General: The Council for Licensed Conveyancers will be set up under section 12 of the Administration of Justice Act 1985. It will be an independent and self-regulating body. The secretary designate, Mr. Osner, will be responsible to the council and will work independently of the Lord Chancellor's Department. Mr. Osner is a senior legal assistant. Whilst on secondment to the council he will retain the terms and conditions of services applicable to that grade.

Mr. Weetch asked the Attorney-General whether the appointment of Nigel Osner as Secretary Designate to the Council for Licensed Conveyancers was made after consultation with the Law Society.

The Attorney-General: No.

Legal Aid

Mr. Malins asked the Attorney-General how many appeals to the Law Society at Brighton were made by defendants in magistrates courts against a refusal by the court to grant legal aid: and how many of those appeals were successful in each of the years 1983, 1984 and 1985.

The Attorney-General: This information has been published in the Law Society's annual reports on the operation and finance of part I of the Legal Aid Act 1984 for the financial years since the right to recourse was introduced on 1 March 1984. Information by calendar year cannot be prepared in the time available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Examination Qualifications

Mr. Robert B. Jones asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table setting out the average examination qualifications obtained per candidate at each level of examination in each year since 1970 for schools in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is not available in the form requested.

Prison Population

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the size of the present prison population in Northern Ireland divided into terrorist type offenders and other offenders categorised by age and by sex in the following groups; under 18 years olds, 18-25 years, 25 to 30 years, 30 to 40 years, 40 to 50 years, 50 to 60 years and over 60 years; and if he will give a breakdown of the length of sentence being served by each age group.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Autocrime

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many stolen vehicles were recovered in each police division in Northern Ireland in 1985.

Mr. Scott: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of gross domestic product at market prices was allocated to expenditure on social security in 1960, 1970, 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

Mr. MacGregor: Expenditure on social security as a proportion of gross domestic product at market prices was as follows:

	Proportion of gross domestic product
1960	6
1970	8
1979	11
1980	11
1981	12
1982	13
1983	13
1984	13

An estimate for 1985 is not yet available.

Gross National Product

Dr. Owen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for the gross national product per capita adjusted for the differing rates of inflation between those countries classed as having industrial market economies for the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lawson: The reply given to the right hon. Member on 27 February included figures for all but three of the countries classified as "Industrial Market Economies" by the World Bank. The following figures, which are again taken from the *World Development Review 1985*, complete this list:

Country	GNP per capita Dollars 1983
Italy	6,400
Ireland	5,000
Spain	4,780

Word Processors

Mr. Chope asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many word processors there are in his Department.

Mr. Brooke: Fifty three.

Customs and Excise Office, Faversham

Mr. Crouch asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the effect of moving the Customs and Excise office from Faversham to Ramsgate on shipping using Whitstable harbour.

Mr. Brooke: The customs paperwork and control of cargo concerning shipping using Whitstable harbour is to be transferred from Faversham to Ramsgate. There are no other changes.

Mr. Crouch asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy not to transfer the Customs and Excise office from Faversham to Ramsgate.

Mr. Brooke: At present the office at Faversham deals with both customs and excise matters and it is only the customs work which will be transferred — the excise work will continue to be performed at Faversham.

Customs is constantly reviewing its staffing arrangements and seeking to achieve greater efficiency in line with Government policy. The local collector considers the transfer of entry processing work to Ramsgate will lead to better management and greater efficiency where it will be possible to make use of new office technology as it is introduced. I understand that discussions are continuing with the trade interests concerned to ensure they are able to take full advantage of benefits accruing from this transfer.

Corporate Sector (Taxation)

Dr. Owen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what the increase in the total oil taxation in the corporate sector has been between 1979-80 and 1985-86 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms;

(2) what the increase in the non-oil taxation in the corporate sector has been between 1979-80 and 1985-86 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* in real terms.

Mr. Lawson [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1986]: The figures are as follows:

**Change between 1979-80 and 1985-86 (£ billion)*

		(a) cash	(b) †1984-85 prices
1.	North Sea revenues	+9·1	+7·4
2.	Onshore corporation tax‡	+3·3	+0·6
3.	Total	+12·4	+8·0

* Based on autumn statement forecast for 1985-86.
† Deflated using GDP deflator.
‡ Non-North sea mainstream corporation tax, plus advance corporation tax but excluding ACT set off against North sea liabilities.

THE ARTS

North-west Region

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Minister for the Arts if he will give a breakdown of Government funding for the Arts allocated for the north-west region for each year from 1978 to 1985.

Mr. Luce: The figures are as follows:

	£
1978-79	490,069
1979-80	578,474
1980-81	662,483
1981-82	751,055
1982-83	864,849
1983-84	932,393
1984-85	1,031,953
1985-86	1,084,500

These figures show real terms increase over the period of 18 per cent.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what was the increase in the United Kingdom population of working age in the periods 1974-75 to 1978-79 and 1979-80 to 1983-84, respectively; and what was the average annual percentage increase in each of the two periods.

Mr. Lang: The United Kingdom population of working age increased by 615,000 between mid-1974 and mid-1978, and by 758,000 between mid-1979 and mid-1983. The average annual percentage increase in each of the two periods was 0·5 and 0·6 per cent. respectively.

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many jobs in total were lost in the United Kingdom between 1979 and 1985; and how many jobs in total were lost in the rest of the European Economic Community during the same period.

Mr. Lang: Information on employment in the European Community as a whole is available only up to 1984. Between 1979 and 1984 total employment in the United Kingdom fell by 1,391,000, while in the rest of the European Community Ten it fell by 548,000.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Paymaster General what proportion of people were in work in Amber Valley and Derbyshire for *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1975 and *(c)* the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Chope asked the Paymaster General how much information his Department keeps about the identity of individuals who have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Lang: My Department keeps the name, address, national insurance number and the first date of claim of all unemployed claimants.

Mr. Marlow asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed *(a)* in total and *(b)* in full-time equivalent in (i) 1956, (ii) 1960, (iii) 1970, (iv) 1980 and (v) 1985.

Mr. Lang: The available estimates are as follows:

Employed labour force in Great Britain*

September	*Thousands*
1956†	24,049
1960	23,737
1970	24,236
1980	24,549
1985	23,799

* The employed labour force is the sum of employees in employment, the self employed and Her Majesty's forces.

† The figure for 1956 is based on the count of national insurance cards and is not directly comparable with the figures for later years. A fully comparable figure for 1956 might be about 600,000 lower than the recorded figure.

The employees in employment estimates are split between full and part-time for census of employment dates and, for females only, quarterly since 1977. These estimates are as follows for the available dates nearest to those specified in the question.

Part-time employees in employment in Great Britain

	Male Thousands	*Female Thousands*
June 1971	584	2,757
September 1980	n/a	3,834
September 1981	718	3,781
September 1985	n/a	4,340

n/a=Not available.

Quarterly estimates of the numbers of part-time male employees for dates from September 1984 will be published when the results of the 1984 census of employment become available later this year.

The available estimates are insufficiently detailed for the calculation of a reliable series of full-time equivalent estimates.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General to what the difference between the estimated cost of a two year YTS and an amount equal to double the current cost of a one-year cost of a one-year YTS is attributable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: There are two main reasons why two-year YTS will not cost twice as much as one-year YTS. First, not all those who enter two-year YTS will stay for a second year, even though entitled to, and therefore the number of trainees on the new scheme will be less than double the number on the existing scheme. Secondly, we expect employers to increase their contribution to training costs in two-year YTS.

Mr. Deakins asked the Paymaster General what is the average annual cost to Her Majesty's Government of each trainee on a one-year YTS; what will be the average annual cost on a two-year YTS; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The average cost per filled place of one-year YTS in 1985-86 is estimated at around £2,800 per year. The corresponding cost for two-year YTS in 1986-87 is expected to be around £2,600 per year.

Community Programme

Mr. Steel asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy to increase the average wage for community programme employees to £69 per week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the right hon. Member to my reply on 19 February, at column 183. The average wage is under review.

Sir Trevor Skeet asked the Paymaster General how many community programme schemes have been submitted to the Manpower Services Commission for approval in England in the past year; and how many have been actually approved giving the total number of people covered by such schemes.

Mr. Lang: It is not possible, except at disproportionate cost, to identify the project applications submitted to the Manpower Services Commission in the past year and subsequently approved or rejected. However, the stock of projects in England has increased from 6,500 providing 104,500 jobs at the end of January 1985, to 8,100 providing 144,500 jobs on 31 January 1986.

Long-term Unemployed Persons

Mr. Hancock asked the Paymaster General what new schemes he is considering for the long-term unemployed in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area.

Mr. Lang: All our current employment and training measures are available in the Portsmouth travel-to-work area. In addition, we are considering the results of our pilot initiatives in their particular areas to see what success we are achieving, and how we can best build on it.

ENVIRONMENT

Housing Defects (Financial Allocation)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why, in allocating £30 million of 1986-87 housing investment programme allocation for works under the Housing Defects Act 1984, no local authority in the north-west was given anything.

Sir George Young: The need for expenditure by local authorities under the Housing Defects Act is taken into account in the generalised needs index. But in recognition of the needs of those regions containing authorities likely to face particularly large obligations under the Act in 1986-87, £30 million was allocated to the regional level outside the GNI. No such separate allocation was considered justified for the north-west region.

North-west (Non-traditional Properties)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for each local authority in the north-west, how many properties each has constructed in a non-traditional way, as provided in the Minister's repair and improvement inquiry of July 1985.

Sir George Young: In their returns for the Department's inquiry into the condition of the local authority housing stock in England, local authorities in the north-west reported that they owned the following numbers of dwellings constructed in non-traditional systems:

Local Authority	Number of dwellings
Allerdale	516
Blackburn	2,865
Blackpool	77
Bolton	2,966
Burnley	1,521
Bury	289
Carlisle	715
Chester	234
Chorley	136
Congleton	82
Copeland	1,135
Crew & Nantwich	1,167
Eden	16
Ellesmere Port	1,357
Fylde	6
Halton	380
Hyndburn	889
Knowsley	6,446
Lancaster	361
Liverpool	2,782
Manchester	20,900
Oldham	4,340
Pendle	91
Preston	1,647
Ribble Valley	109
Rochdale	4,373
Rossendale	523
S. Lakeland	95
S. Ribble	200
Salford	6,115
Sefton	2,025
St. Helens	764
Stockport	2,124
Tameside	3,625
Trafford	431
Vale Royal	2,254
W. Lancs	2,866
Warrington	1,567
Wigan	1,024
Wirral	6,676
Wyre	143

Note: No return was received from Macclesfield.

Housing Investment Programme (North-West)

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate which local authorities in the north-west of England have obtained a supplementary housing investment programme allocation for 1985-86; how much additional allocation each received; and what was the original allocation for these authorities for 1985-86.

Sir George Young: Three local authorities in the north-west region (Bolton, Preston and Wigan) appeared likely, on the basis of their estimates, to have insufficient resources to meet their obligations under the Housing Defects Act in 1985-86. These authorities were advised last August that if their estimates were confirmed by actual expenditure, retrospective additional housing investment programme allocations would be made after the end of the financial year. The maximum additional allocations, and the initial housing investment programme allocations, are as follows:

	Maximum additional allocation £ million	Initial HIP allocation 1985-86 £ million
Bolton	0·756	12·849
Preston	0·095	4·200
Wigan	0·500	7·685

Mrs. B. E. Manning, Southwark (House Purchase)

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to when Mrs. B. E. Manning of 57 Carver road can expect to complete the purchase of her home from Southwark council.

Mr. John Patten: An application to buy was made more than 15 months ago. Southwark council took almost five months to issue an offer notice, and there was further delay while it reconsidered the leasehold terms of the disposal. I understand, however, that Mrs. Manning has now been offered a completion date of 17 March. It is clear that unreasonable delays have occurred in this case, and I hope my hon. Friend will write to me if Mrs. Manning encounters any further difficulties.

Boundary Yard and Courtenay Road Woking

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision on Woking borough council's application for a compulsory purchase order on land at Boundary yard and Courtenay roads, Woking, which was the subject of a public inquiry on 2 July 1985.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I am writing to my hon. Friend about this matter.

Woolaway Homes

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the total number and their location, by district council area, of Woolaway type homes eligible for refurbishment under the Housing Defects Act, and the number of refurbishments *(a)* commenced, *(b)* completed and *(c)* not started because of grant limits.

Sir George Young: In 1983, local authorities in England estimated that some 700 prefabricated reinforced concrete dwellings of the Woolaway type had been sold by the public sector and were in private ownership. The number qualifying for assistance under the Housing Defects Act is therefore likely to be of that order. The local authorities reporting owned Woolaway dwellings in their area were:

Bristol
Carrick
Cotswold
Mendip
Mid Devon
Newbury
Northavon
North Devon
North Dorset
North Wiltshire
Purbeck
Restormel
Salisbury
Sedgemoor
South Hams
South Somerset

Taunton Deane
Tewkesbury
Thamesdown
Wansdyke
Warwick
West Dorset
West Wiltshire
Weymouth and Portland
Woodspring

I regret that information on the number of Woolaway houses being reinstated is not currently available.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by district council area, the number of completions, by type, of homes under the Housing Defects Act, and the number of refurbishments currently under way.

Sir George Young: I regret that information on the number of reinstatement works completed or under way is not currently available.

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will hold an early meeting with the officers of the National Federation of Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete Home Owners to discuss the implementation of the Housing Defects Act; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Flats and Estates (Sales)

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many schemes where local authority-owned blocks of flats or housing estates have been disposed of to private companies for refurbishment or redevelopment for sale with the aid of an urban development grant have been the subject of competitive bids.

Sir George Young: All applications for urban development grant are made by local authorities in respect of named developers and specified sites. There are currently eight schemes for the refurbishment for sale of local authority housing for which offers of UDG have been taken up or are outstanding. My Department are aware that in four cases the local authorities concerned had previously sought or considered proposals from three or more developers.

Big Ben

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the chimes from the Big Ben clock tower will be restored to proper working order; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much the London Docklands Development Corporation has spent on public relations and advertising in each of the last three years.

Sir George Young: The information is as follows:

	1982-83 £	*1983-84* £	*1984-85* £
Public relations	66,000	79,000	90,000
Advertising	1,343,000	698,000	358,000
TOTAL	1,409,000	777,000	448,000

Docklands Airport

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the recent London Docklands Development Corporation's billboard poster campaign in support of the proposed docklands airport; and on what date this campaign started.

Sir George Young: This billboard campaign uses the proposed airport as an example of the advantages of docklands as a business location. The total cost of the campaign, which commenced on 1 February 1986 for one month, is £106,978.

Planning Applications

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his policy has changed over calling in controversial planning applications by local authorities and others where the public interest is affected and where he has had requests that he should do so from representative organisations and individuals.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend's policy remains as set out in DOE circular 2/81, which states that

"The Secretary of State will continue to be very selective about calling in cases for his decision; there will be no change in the criterion that applications will in general be called in only if planning issues of more than local importance are involved".

Industrial Technology Park, Warwick

Sir Dudley Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he has refused to see a deputation representing Warwick town council, the National Farmers Union, the Warwick Preservation Society, local residents' associations and others in connection with Warwickshire county council's decision to locate an industrial technology park in an agricultural and tourist area.

Mr. Tracey: Since my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had already decided not to intervene in this matter, and that decision had been conveyed to Warwickshire county council, to have seen a deputation in those circumstances might have given rise to false expectations.

Local Authority Accounts

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations Her Majesty's Government have received following the publication of draft regulations prescribing the form of local authority statements of accounts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My right hon. Friends have received some 50 representations on the draft regulations which they considered carefully. The responses clearly show that there is a widely held desire to see improvements in local government accounting, and that real progress is already being made in the way in which information about the finances of local authorities is presented, as evidenced by the Audit Commission's profiles. The point was also

made by those in local government that in their view statutory regulation is not an appropriate way of dealing with detailed accounting matters.

My right hon. Friends welcome this commitment of local government to seek improvements in the way in which they keep elected members and the public properly informed about their financial affairs. They also recognise that an unduly rigid regulation of accounting matters could be ineffective. In the circumstances, therefore, they have decided not to proceed with the making of the regulations, but to invite the local authority associations, in conjunction with the Audit Commission and the professional accountancy bodies, to establish in the course of 1986-87 their own formal arrangements for securing further improvement—including greater standardisation—in local authority accounts. My right hon. Friends believe that this will enable local government to build on the work which it is already doing, and that if it accepts this opportunity it should lead to significant improvements in local authority accounting without a need for comprehensive statutory regulations.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Denis Howell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government plan to publish a consultation paper on pension schemes in the event of privatisation for those employed by the water authorities in England and Wales.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1986]: The future of pension arrangements in the water industry is a matter which the water authorities' management need to consider in the context of privatisation. I have met representatives of the industry to discuss this subject and I know that they attach a high priority to it. The industry recognises that it will need to be satisfied that arrangements fair to all interests concerned are made for pensions.

The rights of existing and deferred pensioners, and rights accrued by existing employees under the local government superannuation scheme will be unaffected by privatisation. The industry is now considering what arrangements should be made for new employees and for existing employees in respect of future service.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Farming Methods

Sir Richard Body asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration has been given by him to converting any experimental farms for which he has responsibility into facilities for research and development into organic or biological methods of husbandry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: I have recently given careful consideration to the possibility of converting part or all of one or more of my Department's experimental husbandary farms to organic methods of production. However, I have concluded, given competing claims for these limited research resources, that such a conversion would not be justified at public expense. The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service is nevertheless continuing to monitor developments in this field and is continuing a long-term monitoring project on soils, pests, diseases and crops on a commercial organic farm. Research and development work has been also undertaken on a variety of issues of relevance to organic farming including nitrogen-fixation by white clover; the production of crop varieties which are resistant to pests and diseases; and the development of novel non-chemical methods of pest control. My Department has also recently awarded a research contract to the university of Wales to undertake a three-year study of the nitrogen balance and nitrogen cycle in organic farming systems. Finally, ADAS is always prepared to consider undertaking research projects commissioned and paid for by the industry or by particular sectors of the industry.

Common Fisheries Policy

Mr. Clelland asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and if he will make it his policy to provide regular reports for the House on how well the common fisheries policy enforcement is working.

Mr. Gummer: The Government attach importance to effective enforcement of the common fisheries policy and I already report to the House on a regular basis any discussion of this subject at Fisheries Council meetings as well as making the House aware of any important developments which take place between Council meetings. The responsibility for ensuring that the common fisheries policy is effectively enforced throughout the Community rests, of course, with the Commission, with the help of its inspectorate of inspectorates. At my request the Commission has undertaken to produce early this year a full report on the enforcement situation and I hope that it will be possible to make this report available to the House in due course.

Wheat

Mr. Alton asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the amount of surplus wheat disposed of in 1984-85.

Mr. Gummer: A total of 30,149 tonnes of wheat were released from intervention stores in the United Kingdom in the marketing year 1984-85.

Soil Survey

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the likely effect upon research on soil erosion in the United Kingdom of the job losses already announced in the Soil Survey.

Mr. Jopling: A collaborative programme of work on soil erosion is being undertaken by staff of the Soil Survey of England and Wales, and staff in my Agricultural Development and Advisory Services. This work has been identified as being of high priority by the work programme panel on which both groups are represented. The Soil Survey's involvement in this work will therefore continue in 1986-87, within the overall level of funding by my Department, announced in reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe) on 18 January 1985 at column *248*.

Animals (Exports)

Mr. Hancock asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many live animals were exported, by category, in each year since 1980.

Mr. Jopling: The required figures are shown in the table:

Number of live animals exported from United Kingdom

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Cattle	370,445	320,648	287,459	240,154	233,595	173,033
Sheep	393,258	172,178	146,185	92,737	101,408	84,189
Goats	183	221	517	254	218	291
Pigs	298,197	605,792	618,620	571,245	346,063	234,029
Poultry	10,927,967	15,384,856	13,295,767	11,274,078	9,109,978	9,616,865
Horses, asses and mules	10,613	9,273	9,275	8,900	8,883	9,027
Other live animals	3,125	1,735	19,188	4,493	5,030	8,748

Source: Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.

Food Irradiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he intends to publish details of regulatory mechanisms to control food irradiation.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

A "Report on the Safety and Wholesomeness of Irradiated Foods" which has been presented to Health and Agriculture Ministers by the Advisory Committee on Irradiated and Novel Foods will be published in the spring for public comment. Ministers will consider whether any change in the present regulations appears desirable in the light of the advice contained in the report and the representations received on it.

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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 92**

SESSION 1985-86

17th February—28th February 1986

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There will, however, be headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one will find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

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